



1923

The Labour Movement in India. R.K.Das.

THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN INDIA

FOR CONSULTATION ONLY

By

Rajani Kanta Das, M. Sc., Ph. D.

Former Lecturer in Economics, New York University.



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TO THE MEMORY OF
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PREFACE.

"The Labor Movement in India" is a preliminary study in the working class movement with special reference to its origin, growth, nature and significance. It was begun as a part of "Factory Labor in India" in 1913 and elaborated in connection with "Factory Legislation in India" in 1916. In 1913, the movement entered into a new epoch and achieved a new significance. The treatise has since then been revised and enlarged. Like the springs of a river, the forces of a movement are manifold and concurrent. The division of the labor movement in India into three periods is, therefore, more or less arbitrary.

The application of mechanical power to the productive system and the private ownership of the means of production are the two essential features of modern industrialism, the former giving rise to the factory system and the latter to capitalism. The factory system has evolved through the gradual conquest of nature by man and is, therefore, the most efficient method of production known up to the present time. But it appeared in its final form in England at the time when there was a strong reaction against state control which went into excess under mercantilism and when the doctrine of laissez faire and individualism was the dominant social philosophy. It was naturally taken up by private enterprise which eventually developed into capitalism. Although capitalism has been a great incentive to the growth of the factory system, the relation between the two is historical and accidental rather than necessary and fundamental.

The extreme poverty of the people and the international character of modern industries make the adoption of the factory system by India ab-



olutely necessary. Under the economic and political conditions, the growth of capitalism is also inevitable in India. The reasons for such inevitability are obvious: First, capitalism is still the quickest method of industrialisation of a country. Second, social ownership and even social control of industries imply a certain degree of concentration and integration which can perhaps be better developed under capitalism. Third, under the political domination of capitalistic England, it is the only course open to her. Fourth, the experiences of Russia within the last few years show that the overthrow of capitalism is the problem of the world rather than that of any one weak nation. Capitalism will run its full gamut in India as in other countries. But Indian capitalism being largely imperialistic, the chances are that it will play itself out more quickly.

Like feudalism, capitalism is a passing phase in social evolution. It has already outlived its utility in industrially advanced countries and has even become a hindrance to social progress. It is bound to change or give way to some other system. In order to succeed it, a new system must, however, be equally efficient in production and capable of doing away with the present injustice in distribution. Moreover, as industrial control encroaches upon political rights and social privileges, the new system must also secure social and political equality to the majority of people.

Such a system cannot be achieved by merely dethroning capital and enthroning labor. Even the establishment of the rule by the workers including peasants and artisans does not necessarily solve the social problem. As long as control, whether social, political or industrial, remains with a few, ex-



exploitation and dictatorship are bound to continue and thus to retard social progress. A democratic society is possible only when a considerable number of social population can replace industrial experts rather than merely "wheel them out", can participate in local and national governments rather than vote for political candidates and can create a new social attitude rather than accept old social custom. Moreover, social democracy is not so much a goal in itself as a condition for the highest and richest expression of an individual and the moral and intellectual progress of society, which can be achieved by the development of new ideals and aspirations, especially among the masses. The solution of the problem lies not in the mere substitution of one system by another, but in the inauguration of an elaborate system of education in modern science and philosophy and of training in the efficiency for social, political and industrial service.

The economic interests occupying the greatest part of the youthful vigor and of the wakeful days are one of the primary forces of social evolution. They are, therefore, the foundation upon which social democracy can be built. The labor movement aims primarily at the reorganisation of the industrial system and secondarily at the readjustment of the social and political institutions, and is, therefore, one of the most important means to the achievement of social democracy. It is from this viewpoint that the author has tried to understand the labor movement.

Berlin, February 1, 1923.

Rajani Kanta Das.



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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.

Old Industrial Organisation.

From the earliest times, India has been a country of small communities. A comparatively large village, or a group of smaller ones, forms the village, the chief industrial unit in the country.

Agriculture is the principal industry of the village. Of other industries, weaving, smithing, oil-pressing, and pottery-making are the chief. These industries together with some other minor ones make up the self-sufficing system of the village economy, which is still the dominant feature of the industrial organisation of India.

The whole industrial population of the village may be divided into two classes, the cultivators and the artisans, the former providing food and raw materials, and the latter supplying the other simple needs of rural life. In addition to these principal original classes, there have grown up, in the course of time, other classes of people, such as bankers, tradesmen, physicians, scribes, and landlords. Every village has also its menials or "servants", such as washermen, barbers, and scavengers.

Towns began to grow among these village communities even in the early times. Royal residences, places of pilgrimage, and seaports rose into prominence as industrial centres. Generally each town developed one highly specialised industry, such as the manufacture of muslin at Dacca, and of calico at Calicut, although other minor industries also developed to a certain extent.

The handicraft system, which was more or less in the rudimentary stage in the village, became



highly developed in towns. With the growth of the trading classes, the domestic system appeared and established commercial relations with such distant markets as Babylon and Rome. The domestic system was followed by the workshop system, which is still dominant in towns.

Rise of Modern Industrialism.

Until the end of the 18th century, India not only supplied the limited demand of her population for manufactured goods, but also enjoyed a large export trade. With the beginning of the 19th century, Indian industry underwent a complete change. Instead of exporting manufactures, India began to import them and to send out grain and other raw materials in exchange. This rapid change was the direct result of the British domination in India, which began in 1757.

The prime object of British rule in India is the economic exploitation of the country. Under the spirit of mercantilism, Great Britain adopted a policy by which India was made a producer of raw materials for British factories and a purchaser of finished goods from British merchants. As a result of this policy, there followed a complete collapse in the industrial organisation of the country. The artisan class suffered most, for its members had to fall back on land and to depend wholly upon farming. With the decline of the craft system, engineering, architecture, and other industrial skill also disappeared, and the industrial disorganisation was soon followed by intellectual stagnation and moral deterioration of the people.

From this condition India has, within the last two generations, been slowly but surely drifting toward modern industrialism. The self-sufficing



village economy has, in many cases, been replaced by national and international economy. Mechanical power has begun to be applied to productive processes. Indian manufactures are again finding their place in the domestic and even in the foreign markets.

The most important factor which has brought about this change is the increased facility for transportation, especially the railroads. Agriculture soon adapted itself to modern industrialism. Production with special reference to the market has already secured a firm footing in agriculture. The cultivation of indigo, tea, and coffee has been started by British planters. Modern science and invention are being applied to mining and manufacturing, resulting in the growth of collieries and factories. The growth of these modern industries have been offering opportunities of work to an increasingly large number of the population.

Rise of the Wage-earning Classes.

By far the majority of the people in India lives in villages and is occupied in agriculture. Land is owned either individually or collectively. Even where landlordship prevails, the status of the ryot or the cultivator does not materially change. He has to pay only a fixed share of his produce as rent. In either case, the ryot is economically independent. The artisan and other industrial classes invariably enjoy economic freedom. As all industries are conducted on a small scale, there is scarcely need for more labor than that which the individual ryot or artisan, with the help of his family, can render. Co-operation is common among the industrial classes. The occasional need for extra labor is met by temporarily hiring a neighbor. The economic position



of the menial or village servant is not much worse than that of the other classes. He has certain claim upon his remuneration, which has been fixed by custom and is generally paid in kind. Over and above this, he owns his homestead and often a piece of farmland as well. He is always recognised as a necessary and usefull member of the community and a part of the organic life of the village, which is not only an industrial unit but also a social and political whole. The worker has thus been free in the village.

Industries in towns are in the hands of craftsmen or trades-people. They manage their affairs themselves or with the help of hired labor. The help is a sort of apprentice and eventually becomes a master craftsman or independent tradesman. Even if he remains a journeyman, there is no occasion for the formation of a wage-earning class for two reasons: First, the workman invariably belongs to the same caste as his master, and in most cases is his relative. Second, the workman generally lives in a large family group, some member of which are master craftsmen or tradespeople. As in the village, the working men in towns are independent.

Except for the caste system which was itself socio-economic in origin and divided the people into different industrial classes, there did not exist in India any wage-earning class. With the growth of modern industrialism, there is, however, growing such a class.

The decline of craft industries, which supplemented the agricultural income, and the decrease in the size of farms due to the growth of population without a corresponding growth in agricultural land, have made it necessary for a large number of cultivators to hire themselves out for a part of the time. Such



a class of peasant laborers is growing rapidly in the recent years.

The demand for agricultural laborers came almost simultaneously with the British settlement in India. Indigo was first cultivated. Later on tea and coffee plantations were also established. They are now scattered throughout the country and employ a large number of laborers. The abolition of slavery in the British colonies in 1834 was immediately followed by a demand for Indian labor. A large number of Indians were sent out under the indentured system to such colonies as Natal, British Guiana and Fiji. Since then a large number of them has returned to India. These laborers work under contract for a number of years and depend solely upon labor for their livelihood. Being detached from their home communities for a number of years, many of them lose their homesteads and farmlands.

The most important group of workers is to be found in such modern industries as railroads, collieries and factories. Since the Great War, modern industries have been springing up all over the country employing a large number of people.

Some idea of the number and classes of laborers in India may be had from the following table, based mostly on the census of 1911, which is still the latest source of information on the subject:

The number and classes of workers in India:

Classes	Year	Number
Field Work	1911	25,879,293
Domestic service	"	2,718,415
Plantations	"	810,407
Mines	"	224,087
Factories	1919	1,367,136
Railways	"	711,690
Total		31,718,415



From the above table it is seen that there are about 31,718,415 laborers in different industries of India. Of these, 28,597,654 were in field work and domestic service and 3,120,761 were in modern industries, such as plantations, mines, railways and factories.

The number of workers who emigrated from India varied from 17,315 in 1835 to 15,439 in 1910—11 and to 1,602 in 1916—17, after which the immigration stopped. The number of those who have been returning increased from 5,788 in 1910—11 to 7,856 in 1916—17. In 1919—20, 3,783 emigrants returned to India.

Thus a large class of laborers is growing in different industries of the country. However, there has not yet appeared a sharp distinction between the laboring classes and the people from whom they are emerging. Unlike the wage-earning classes in Europe and America, the majority of the laborers in India still retain their homesteads, and some of them even own a piece of farmland, small though it may be, and they do not yet depend completely upon wages for their livelihood.

The first signs of a modern wage-earning class have already appeared in some industrial centers, such as Ahmedabad and Cawnpore. The number of workers who have been separated from homesteads and farms and depend solely upon wages for their livelihood is increasing every day.



PART. I. ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT.

CHAPTER II.

The REGULATION PERIOD.

1875—91.

Immediate Causes.

The first cotton mill was established in Bombay in 1863 and only a few mills were built in the first decade. But early in the seventies, a large number of mills began to spring up in different parts of the Presidency and to employ an increasingly large number of women and children. They generally worked the same number of hours as men. Some of the children were also quite young. The presence of women and children in factories called for regulation and was the fundamental cause of the labor movement.

The initial cause of the movement was, however, the rivalry of Lancashire manufacturers, who looked with apprehension at the rapid growth of the cotton industry in India, where they exported a large part of their commodities. They immediately started agitation for the regulation of working hours in Indian factories, and sent, in 1874, a deputation to the Secretary of State for India to urge upon the necessity of factory legislation.

On the advice of the Secretary of State, the Government of Bombay appointed, on March 25, 1875, a commission for the investigation of factory conditions. The majority of the commission failing to see any necessity of such regulation, the Government of Bombay refused to take further action.

This refusal of the Government of Bombay revived the activities of the Manchester interests,



which were shortly followed by counter-actions by cotton manufacturers in India, minimising the grievances of the laborers. In order to draw the attention of the Government to the conditions of labor in factories, the philanthropists under the leadership of Mr. Sorabjee Shapoorjee Bengalee, C. I. E., soon started agitation, which formed the nucleus of the labor movement in India.

Child Labor Law.

With a view to bring the labor question before the Bombay Legislative Council, Mr. Bengalee drafted a bill. But since the majority report of the commission could not make a case for legislation, the Government of Bombay refused to permit him to introduce it into the Council. Mr. Bengalee appealed to Manchester for support and sent copies of the draft bill to England, which was published in the London Times on September 13, 1878. The publication of Mr. Bengalee's appeal gave rise to fresh agitation in England and led to a motion in the House of Commons on April 4, 1879, for factory legislation in India.

The result of these agitations was that the Government of India drafted a bill and, with the approval of the Provincial Governments, introduced it into the Legislative Council in the same year. The bill was passed on April 15, 1881. The chief provisions of the act were that the minimum and maximum ages of children were fixed at 7 and 12 respectively and their hours of work were limited to 9 a day.

Agitation for Amendment.

The failure of the act to regulate woman labor and to put a stricter restriction on child labor at



once raised the question for amendment, and agitation was started even before the act came into force.

One of the effects of the agitation was that Mr. Meade King, an inspector of cotton factories in the district of Manchester was appointed, in 1882, by the Government of Bombay to supervise and report on the working of the factory act. Mr. King found several inadequacies in the law and made some suggestions for improvement. In order to ascertain the advisability of extending these suggestions into factory legislation, the Government of Bombay appointed another commission in 1884.

Labor Conference.

A counter-agitation was immediately started by the manufacturers in India to minimise the importance of any amendment. In this attempt, the case of labor was either neglected or misrepresented. Laborers together with the philanthropists found it necessary to present their grievances to the Government. Out of this necessity emerged the first labor leader in India, Mr. Narayan Meghjee Lokhanday, who began life as factory laborer and worked for the cause of labor until his death.

The first work of Mr. Lokhanday was to organise a conference of the Bombay factory workers. The main object of it was to present the grievances of factory workers to the commission. The conference held its meetings on September 23 and 26, and drew up a memorial to the commission, which was signed by 5,500 workers and contained the following resolutions:

(1) That all mill-hands be allowed one complete day of rest every Sunday.



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(2) That half an hour's recess be allowed them at noon.

(3) That work in mills should commence at 6.30 A. M. and cease at sunset.

(4) That the payment of wages should be made not later than the 15th of the month following that for which they have been earned.

(5) That a workman sustaining serious injury in the course of his work at the mill, which might disable him for the time being, should receive full wages until recovery, and that in case of his being maimed for life, suitable provision should be made for his livelihood.

The commission duly considered the memorial in arriving at its conclusions. The report was made on January 10, 1885. The Government of Bombay submitted the report to the Government of India, but the latter declined to take any action.

Manchester Resolution.

The failure of the Government of India to amend the factory act led to a second investigation by Mr. Jones, another factory inspector in Lancashire, into the conditions in Bombay factories in 1887. On his return to England, Mr. Jones made several allegations against the factories in India. In 1888, the Secretary of State for India directed that these charges be considered by the Government of India.

In the same year, the cotton industry in India made still rapid progress, and the Manchester Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution recommending the extension of the British child and woman labor laws to India and sending, at the same time, a deputation to the Secretary of State for India to present this resolution. Such attempts on the part of the Manchester interests created resentment and apprehension among



the public of India, especially among the manufacturers, who again started counter-agitation.

Petition to the Government.

In the agitation, which was going on in India, the exact wants of the employees were often misrepresented by employers. It was also said that employees themselves were indifferent to "any direct measure of protection against their employers" or did not feel the necessity of it. In order to show the real nature of their grievances, the workers employed in the spinning and weaving mills of Bombay, submitted a petition to the Governor General of India on October 24, 1889. The petition was based on the resolution of the labor conference in 1884 and contained the following observations:

Regarding the Sunday holiday, the petition made several statements: First, that it would contribute to the health and energy of employees, which would result in better work, both as to quality and quantity, and should thus benefit employers as well. Second, that it would afford the operatives the much needed opportunity of attending to their household duties, especially shopping, which for lack of time, they were obliged to do with hawkers at exorbitant prices. Third, that it would also afford them opportunity to meet their relatives and friends, who were otherwise employed on week days. Fourth, that the total number of holidays on account of festivals did not amount to more than 11 days in the year. The petition also pointed out that owing to the lack of sufficient number of holidays, workers had to be absent in order to attend household duties and were fined two days' wages for one day's absence.



With regard to the commencement of work in the morning, the petition said that the uncertainty then prevailing with regard to the hour for starting work was very embarrassing and was the source of great inconvenience and discomfort to workers and that a fixed and uniform hour of attendance was, therefore, greatly needed.

As to the payment of wages, the petition pointed out that the great delay in payment caused a good deal of inconvenience to the employees, and added that if the millowners desired a sort of hold on their employees to prevent desertion, the necessity of the case would be fully met by retaining in their hands a fortnight's wages of the men in arrears. In this connection, the petition also stated that cases in which employers illegally withheld the hard-earned wages of workers were so frequent that a reference to the court of small causes would convince the Government that wages were in many cases recovered only by recourse to the court. Hundreds of operatives had to forego their wages on account of the trouble involved in appealing to the judges.

"It has been said", continued the petition "that an Indian mill operative is not as hard working as an English workman and that a mill operative in England does the work of three men employed in the same work in an Indian mill. The real cause of this is the bad machinery and bad material used in mills. It is true that three men are required to manage the machine in Indian factories, but these three men, it should be borne in mind, do their work for longer hours without intermission in a more enervating climate and on poorer wages. The operatives in Indian factories have to perform their tasks without many facilities afforded in England



and calculated to lessen the burden of workmen and to preserve their constitution against breakdown. The breakage in the thread, for instance, is so continuous here on account of the bad quality of cotton, that millowners are compelled to employ more men. If the cotton were of good quality, and the concessions, which are given in England were granted here, one man could manage a machine as well as an English operative."¹

The claim for compensation for accidents, the petition further stated, was made in the interest of humanity. The distress brought about by persons being maimed for life, or even for few months, was appalling, and some relief to mitigate the sufferings and hardships was needed. The petition asked whether the amount of fines and forfeited wages could not advantageously and with propriety be appropriated for this humane purpose. The necessity for a provision of this character had already been recognised in some mills, where sufferers were adequately provided for. Among people not yet alive to the advantages of provident funds and mutual benefit societies, some arrangement affording relief to the injured was much needed.

✓ The petition finally prayed that the interest of operatives should be carefully watched in the amendment of the factory act. ✓

Revival of Agitation.

In reply to the inquiry of the Secretary of State, the Government of India denied the charges made by the British factory inspector, but consented to amend the factory act according to the recommendation of the Bombay Factory Commission of

¹ Gt. Brit. Parl. Papers, 1890—91, Vol. 59, H. of C. 86, pp. 106—107.



1884. A bill was accordingly introduced into the Legislative Council, but the Secretary of State for India, under the pressure of the Manchester interests, insisted on stricter measures, and the consideration of the bill was postponed. The delay in the amendment of the factory act by the Government of India led to fresh agitation in England. An attempt was also made to apply to India some of the resolutions of the International Labor Conference held at Berlin from March 15 to 29, 1890. These agitations in Great Britain were followed as usual by counter-actions in India.

Millhands' Association.

One of the most important events of the time was a mass meeting of factory workers numbering upwards of 10,000 persons, held at Bombay on April 24, 1890. Two women addressed the meeting and complained of being forced to work on Sundays. A memorial asking for a weekly holiday was at once drawn and sent to the Bombay Millowners' Association, which granted the request in the general meeting held on June 10, 1890. It was, of course, a great victory for laborers, but without legal compulsion, it could not be enforced.

In the meantime, the labor movement has also made some headway. Mr. Lokhanday, who was the moving spirit of the movement, organised an association of the Bombay mill workers in 1890. The association was called the "Bombay Millhands' Association", with Mr. Lokhanday its president and Mr. D. C. Athaide its secretary. It was the first labor organisation in India.

Labor Journal.

In the agitations and counter-agitations which were going on in India on the issue of the factory



act amendment, there was a good deal of confusion as to the real nature of the grievances of laborers. While the case of employers was well represented in the Indian and Anglo-Indian press, the case of employees was almost neglected. It became, therefore, necessary for the workers to present their case to the Government and the public through a recognised organ. About the same time the Bombay Mill-hands' Association was founded, Mr. Lokhanday also started a paper, called the *Dinabandhu*, or the friend of the poor, which was the first labor journal in India.

As the very name shows, the attitude of the paper was more or less paternalistic. It presented the labor side in the form of appeal rather than of right. But the whole labor movement of this period was permeated with the same spirit and the organ served its purpose. It became the clearing house of the grievances of Bombay laborers and helped draw public attention to the cause of labor.

Labor Representation.

In the meantime, the Secretary of State for India sent the resolutions of the Berlin Labor Conference to the Government of India for consideration, and suggested to appoint a commission to inquire into the conditions of factory labor. The Government of India accordingly appointed, on September 25, 1896, a commission of which Mr. Sorabjee Bengalee, the leader of the Indian philanthropic movement for labor legislation, was one of the three members. The commission was assisted by three local members without the power to prepare or sign the report. Bengal and the North Western Provinces and Oudh were locally represented respectively by Babu Rasik Lal Ghose, a public spirited man of Calcutta, and



Mr. Framji Manekji, a foreman in a Cawnpore wooden mill. The Presidency of Bombay was locally represented by Mr. Lokhanday, president of the Bombay Millhands' Association.

The duty of the local members were to procure suitable evidence from the factory workers for the commission. They selected 96 operatives in 34 factories of Bombay, Amhedabad, Cawnpore and Calcutta, which were visited by the commission. The witnesses comprised of men, women, and children, and in their evidence before the commission, brought forward the grievances of factory labor.

Demands of Workers.

Before the completion of the report, the commission received an address, dated November 8, 1890, from the Bombay Millhands' Association. The association discussed the importance of the factory act amendment and asked for inclusion among the provisions of the proposed amendment several resolutions, which it called its "demands". These demands may be summarised as follows:

(1) Millhands should get one complete day of rest on Sundays.

(2) The working day should be included within the period from 6 A. M. to 5 : 30 P. M.

(3) If practicable, one hour's rest should be given during the day; if not, full half an hour's complete rest at noon every day.

(4) Payment should be made on the 15th of each month.

(5) Children from 9 to 14 should work half time.

(6) Women should work from 7 A. M. to 5 P. M.

(7) Provisions should be made for the help of sick and injured persons. Every factory should have a dispensary.



(8) A school should be maintained by every mill for the education of the half-timers.

"If the above points are fairly attended to," concluded Mr. Lokhanday, "in the factory act now to be amended, I think the mill hands will have no cause to complain."¹

The commission took into consideration the demands of the Millhands' Association and made its report on November 12, 1890.

Woman Labor Law.

The recommendations of the commission were not satisfactory to the Manchester interests, which influenced the Secretary of State for India to demand stricter measures. The Government of India made several concessions though under protest and immediately submitted the bill to the Legislative Council for final consideration. The bill was passed on March 19, 1891. The chief provisions of the act were the regulation of woman labor to 11 hours a day with an interval of rest for 1½ hours, and the increase in the minimum and maximum ages of children from 7 and 12 to 9 and 14 respectively.

The immediate effect of the regulation of woman labor was the discharge of 259 women from Ahmedabad factories, where they were employed in the same kind of work as men, and the reduction in the wages of the rest by 25 per cent. The compulsory rest period of an hour and a half made the work of women unadaptable to that of men, who had only a half hour's rest. The woman workers at Ahmedabad, therefore, sent a petition to the Government of India for exempting Ahmedabad factories from the application of the law. Since a large number of

¹ *St. Brit. Parl. Papers, 1890-91, Vol. 59, H. of C. 86, p. 110.*



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discharged women were taken back in the reeling and winding departments, where the work was done without machinery, and where no man was employed, the Government refused to take any action upon the petition.

With the enactment of the Factory Act of 1891, the first period of the labor movement, the chief object of which was the regulation of child and woman labor, subsided.

Subsequent Events.

Following the factory act of 1891, the cotton industry in India met with one misfortune after another for over a decade. Meanwhile, the jute industry, which was started in Bengal in 1854, made a very rapid progress and aroused the spirit of rivalry of the Dundee Chamber of Commerce, which passed resolutions in 1894, advocating stricter factory legislation for India. In 1904—05, there came a sudden boom in the cotton industry. A profitable market both at home and abroad led to unusual activities in cotton factories, which were soon followed by excessive hours. The Anglo-Indian press, representing Manchester interests, at once raised its voice against overwork. The Bombay factory workers also sent a memorandum to the Government of India praying for the regulation of their working hours by legislation. The question of factory legislation was, therefore, reopened by the Government of India, and a bill was introduced into the Legislative Council in 1905.

In the meantime, a new movement appeared in the national life of India. Bengal was partitioned by the Government of India in 1905. As a protest, the Bengalees boycotted the British goods and started Swadeshi or a movement for the use of the



country-made goods. An open antagonism began between the Government and the Bengalees. Some of the Bengali leaders took the cause of labor and helped the workers win their strikes in such industries as printing and transportation.

In 1906, a deputation of the Factory Workers' Association of Lancashire waited upon the Secretary of State for India to urge upon the restriction on the labor of the adult males in Indian factories. In the same year, the Government of India, on the advice of the Secretary of State, appointed a committee to inquire into the condition of textile factories. This committee was followed, in 1907, by a commission, which investigated the conditions of factories of all kinds in India. Both the committee and the commission advocated the legislative regulation of adult male labor in textile factories. A new bill was introduced into the Legislative Council on July 30, 1909.

The labor movement started by Mr. Bengalee and Mr. Lokhanday did not die out entirely. The laboring classes took it up. They lacked leadership and also courage to come out openly for their cause, but kept up the activities to some extent. In 1909, a meeting of the Bombay factory workers was held condemning some of the practices of the employers and supporting the proposition of the Government to restrict the work of adult males by law.

In 1910, the second organisation of Bombay factory workers was formed under the name of K a m a g a r - H i t - V a r t h a k S a b h a or Workers' Welfare Association. The association sent a memorial to the Government of India supporting the proposed limitation of the working hours for adult males to 12 hours in any one day and pointing out the necessity of provisions for compensation, education



of factory children, betterment of housing conditions, and the removal of taverns from the neighbourhood of mills. One of the functions of the association was the settlement of disputes between employers and employees. The association also started a weekly paper, called the K a m a g a r - S a m a c h a r or the Labor News, in which the grievances of laborers were fully discussed.

In 1911, the third factory act was passed regulating the labor of adult males in textile factories to 12 hours a day. The working hours of children in textile factories were also further limited to 6 a day. This act has recently been amended, as shown later on.



CHAPTER III. THE ABOLITION PERIOD.

1891—1917.

The Indentured System.

The fundamental cause of the labor movement of this period was the indentured system, by which Indian laborers were sent out to British colonies to take the place of the negro slaves emancipated in 1834. The system was introduced into Mauritius and Trinidad in 1834, into Jamaica in 1845, and into Natal in 1860. British Guiana, Dutch Guiana, Fiji, Straits Settlements, and the Federated Malaya States had also a large number of indentured laborers from India.

The Indians in these colonies were of three different kinds: First, the indentured or re-indentured laborers. Second, ex-indentured laborers and children born of the ex-indentured or indentured laborers. Third, the Indians who followed indentured laborers in professional or business capacity, or who went there for trade, travel or other purposes.

By the indentured system, simple and illiterate people of India were recruited and legally bound to go to a strange country where manners, customs, and even language were unknown to them. Once in the colonies, they were bound to the estate where they were employed and could not move without a permit. Under this condition, they had to stay 5 years. Often they had no other recourse but to re-indenture themselves.

The conditions of the indentured laborers can better be imagined than described. They were often crowded together in miserable dwellings. The hours of work were unusually long. It has been said that even the slave master had some consideration for his



slaves, as they were his chattels, but the employer of the indentured laborers was destitute of any human sympathy. Death resulting from continuous grinding did not mean any money loss to him. The wages were extremely low. Even after 5 years of hard labor, an indentured laborer could not save more than Rs. 150, which means a saving of Rs. 2½ a month.

The social condition was as bad as the economic. Marriage was often a mockery. By the regulation of the system, every 100 men were accompanied by 40 women, who were often of disreputable character. The whole population was subject to gross immorality. There was scarcely any provision for the education of the children or the recreation of the adults.

The life of the average indentured laborers was extremely miserable. They were often fined, assaulted, whipped, and imprisoned without sufficient cause. Anguish and disillusion often led them to utter hopelessness, out of which many of them found relief only in suicide.

Indians in South Africa.

While these conditions were more or less applicable to all the colonies, where Indians worked as indentured laborers, there arose some specific problems in South Africa which brought to the attention of the Indian public the ignominy and inhumanity of the system.

As the European colonies in South Africa began to grow in prosperity, to which Indian laborers, farmers and traders contributed a considerable share, the colonists realised that South Africa might be made a permanent home for European population and adapted a policy of Asian exclusion.



x In the Transvaal, the law against the Asians was passed as early as 1883. In the course of time, there developed a body of laws by which the Indians were deprived of their rights and privileges as a free people. Natal began her repressive measures in 1891. She inaugurated in that year a series of laws, which made the condition of the indentured system much more severe, and brought it to the public attention. The second series began as early as 1895 with the object of stopping the growth of free Indian laborers. By an act of 1896, an annual head tax of £ 3 per head was levied for every adult male above the age of 16 and for every adult female above the age of 13. Besides there was a poll tax of £ 1. The third series of laws began in 1896 with the purpose of depriving the Indians of their political and economic rights.

The direct effects of these measures were race hatred, color prejudice and trade jealousies which marked the attitude of the colonists toward the Indians. The grievances of the Indians in South Africa might be summarised as follows: First, they could not acquire any political and municipal enfranchisement. Second, they could not hold immovable property. Third, they were liable to be confined to certain localities. These discriminations and disabilities, especially those inaugurated by the Natal Government, served as the initial cause of the labor movement in the second period.

Passive Resistance.

Early in the nineties, Mr. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Bar-at-Law, was sent by an Indian legal firm to Natal to look after the interests of some Indians and to act as their legal advisor. About this time the Natal Government introduced the bills into



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colonial Parliament to disfranchise the Indians. Mr. Gandhi decided to stay in South Africa and fight for the cause of the Indians.

The first act of Mr. Gandhi was to organise the Indians into an active body for the preservation of their own interests. After a short visit to India in 1896, he returned with his family to the field of his activities. In 1899, when the Boer War broke out, Mr. Gandhi, with his followers, came to the help of the British Government and organised medical help. After the war, the Transvaal became a part of the British Empire. Although one of the reasons of the war, as given out by the British Government, was to right the wrong suffered by the Indians at the hands of the Boers, the peace did not bring any relief to the suffering Indians. On the contrary, a new Asian department was constituted to deal with the Asians as a special class.

The work of Mr. Gandhi went on as before. In 1903, he started a news paper, called the Indian Opinion, to educate the Indians on the South African situation and to express the Indian view to the colonists. Soon after, he founded a community, called the Phoenix Settlement, where a model was set for practising the ideal of simple life. In 1906, the new government of the Transvaal brought about a new bill against Asian immigration. The most obnoxious feature of it was that all Indians were made to register themselves and stamp their fingerprints for identification — a process resorted to only in the case of criminals. The Indian community protested strongly against such a measure. The very moment the bill was under discussion in the legislature, the Indian community under the leadership of Mr. Gandhi took a solemn vow never to submit to such a measure whatever might be the con-



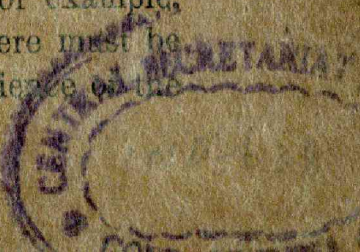
sequences. It was the vow of passive resistance.

The bill was passed in 1907. But the Indians refused to obey the law. Wholesale arrests followed immediately. Mr. Gandhi himself was imprisoned for two months. Husbands and wives, mothers and children were separated from one another and put in prisons, but the Indians never broke their faith. Ninety-five per cent of the Indians proved themselves true in this new battle field.

In consequence of the general agitation in England and India, the act was suspended on the understanding that voluntary registration would be accepted and the act be repealed. In accordance with this assurance, the Indians voluntarily registered. But the promise made by the Transvaal Government was broken and compulsory registration revived. Mr. Gandhi and his followers also revived the oath of passive resistance. Arrests and imprisonments again followed. Between January, 1908, and June, 1909, no less than 2,500 sentences of imprisonment were passed, the age of the prisoners varying from 16 to 60.

Agitation against the System.

The news of the conditions of the Indians in the British colonies had long reached India. The laborers, who returned to India after the expiry of indenture, brought home many tales of their woes and sufferings. Mr. Gandhi himself on his return trips to India, addressed many meetings on the situation of the Indians in South Africa. Several methods for dealing with the problem were also suggested. The British colonial secretary, for example, suggested, on September 4, 1895, that there must be something to touch the commercial conscience of the





colonists in South Africa to bring them to reason. The matter also received some attention in 1901 in connection with the amendment of Assam Labor and Immigration Act. In 1903, the East India Association suggested to stop the Indian emigrants to South Africa until the obnoxious laws were repealed.

It was, however, in 1907 that India became really conscious of the actual condition of her people in the British colonies. The passive resistance by the Indians incurred the full vengeance of the colonists in South Africa and had several effects in India: First, the sufferings of the Indians in South Africa sent a "thrill of horror through the heart of every Indian." Second, the heroic fight of their countrymen against unjust treatment filled them with pride and admiration. Third, the discrimination of the colonists roused the spirit of retaliation. Fourth, the general public, especially the intellectuals, realised more than ever before their duty and responsibility to the Indian emigrants abroad and to the laboring classes at home.

In 1909, Mr. H. S. L. Polak, the editor of the *Indian Opinion*, was deputed to India. He addressed meetings all over the country on the Indian situation in South Africa. The result of his visit was that the public attention was concentrated on the enormities of the system. In 1910, a resolution moved by Mr. G. K. Gokhale was passed in the Indian legislature authorising the Governor-General in Council to prohibit the emigration of Indians as indentured laborers to Natal. The same year, the Indian government requested the newly-formed Union Government of South Africa for the settlement of the question. The Union Government consequently brought forward a bill, but did not omit the discriminating features of the law.



In 1911, Mr. Polak returned to India. The agitation was again in full swing. Early in 1912, Mr. Gokhale moved a resolution for abolishing the system altogether, but the Government of India opposed the motion. The Government, however, appointed a commission of two members to report on the conditions of Indian laborers in the British colonies. About the same time, Mr. Gokhale went to South Africa to make a first-hand study of the situation. Soon after Rev. C. F. Andrews was sent by the Indian Citizenship Association of Bombay to study the condition in Fiji, where a high rate of suicides existed among the indentured laborers.

In the meantime, a new complication had arisen. A decision of the Union court declared that all Indian marriages were null and void under the law of the Union Government. It was immediately protested against by the Indian community in South Africa. In 1913, a new bill was introduced by the Union Government for dealing with the situation, but it failed to provide for any settlement. Passive resistance was again revived by the Indians.

One of the plans of the Indians in South Africa was to organise strikes among indentured laborers. A small body of women from Natal and the Transvaal started the work. While the women in Natal were arrested and imprisoned, those in the Transvaal succeeded, before imprisonment, in holding meetings and in calling upon Indian workers to refuse to work. At their instigation, thousands of Indian laborers in coal mines laid down their tools and went on strike. From coal mines, the strike spread to the sugar plantations in Natal. An attempt by the authorities to suppress the strike resulted in several casualties, including the dead and the wounded.



Meanwhile the Transvaal Government prohibited the entry of the Indians into its territories. As a protest against this order, 3,000 Indians under the leadership of Mr. Gandhi began an "invasion" into the Transvaal. After several days' march without food and shelter, the party arrived in the Transvaal only to be arrested and imprisoned. Mr. Gandhi himself was sentenced to gaol for 15 months. It was one of the most remarkable incident in the history of passive resistance.

The sufferings of the Indians and the treatment by the Government in South Africa created strong resentment throughout the length and breadth of India. Even the Government of India was alarmed at the situation, and asked the Union Government for the appointment of a commission to investigate into the whole affairs. The latter Government consented and appointed a commission, which, after due investigation, reported in favor of the Indian community. The recommendations of the commission was accepted by the Union Government and put into effect in the Indian Relief Act of 1914. The three pound head tax was repealed and the freedom of residence was granted to ex-indentured laborers. Peace was restored for the time being.

Indians on the Pacific Coast.

In the meantime, a new source of trouble arose on the Pacific Coast, which stirred the people of India. Some of the Punjabees, who had been recruited by the British Government for service in the army and in the police in the Far East, after retiring crossed the Pacific and came to America. Several Sikh soldiers, after celebrating the Diamond Jubilee in Great Britain, passed through Canada, and, seeing the prospects of earning higher wages,



also settled down there. They wrote about the industrial opportunities in Canada and the United States to their relatives and friends in India. These reports caused a large scale immigration of the Hindustanees to America.

In the four years from 1905 to 1908, over five thousand Indians arrived in Canada. Agitation was at once started by the Canadians against the Indian immigration, and led to the adoption of restrictive measures. In the meantime a large number of the Hindustanees also began to immigrate into the United States. A number of them came from Canada. Like Canada, the United States also adopted restrictive measures, first in 1909 and then from 1911 on, until a law was passed in 1917 prohibiting Indian immigration.

Most of the restrictive measures were based on discrimination. Some of the methods adopted brought a good deal of sufferings to the immigrants. A large number of them was detained at the ports of Hong Kong, Victoria, Vancouver, and San Francisco, and excluded or deported on physical unfitness or some such pretext.

Unlike the Indians in the British colonies, the Indians on the Pacific Coast were free laborers or immigrants. They resented such treatment. Those of Canada sent even deputation to the Dominion Government at Ottawa and also to the British Government in London. The discrimination and ignominy which the Indians suffered in America, especially in Canada, aroused a feeling of indignation in India.

The climax of the situation was however reached in 1914. As the Hindustanees were not allowed to come to Canada unless they came directly from



India, Bhai Gurdit Singh and other Hindustanees chartered a steamer, the Komagata Maru, and brought 375 Indians to Vancouver, B. C., on May 22. The immigration authorities refused admission and ordered the ship out of the port at the point of guns and artillery. The appeal of the Indians in British Columbia to the Dominion and British Government for the relief of their countrymen proved fruitless. On July 23, the ship returned to India.

While the sufferings of the passengers due to the lack of water and provisions and to the crossing of the ocean back and forth were really great, a still worse fate was awaiting them at Calcutta, where they landed. The Government of India fearing a political demonstration intended to send the passengers directly back to the Panjab. A conflict soon started between the passengers and the police and the military, in which 16 passengers and on-lookers and 3 officers were killed and many more wounded.

The treatment of the Indian immigrants both by the Canadian and the Indian Governments made a deep impression on the Indian people. The question of Indian emigration and labor was again brought before the public and the labor movement received a new impetus.

Prohibition of Indenture.

Although the Indians in South Africa won a partial victory, which was only temporary, as will be seen, the system of indenture was still in existence. In 1916, Lord Hardinge, then the Governor General of India, stated, however, that the Government of India intended to control labor recruiting in India. In 1917, it was circulated that the Secretary of State for India consented to the



continuation of the system for another 5 years. This news aroused a strong feeling of resentment among the Indians and protest meetings were held all over the country. The Government of India was consequently obliged to prohibit all the emigration from India as a war measure. But the assurance was soon given that the system would never be revived.

Subsequent Events.

Since the passage of the emergency act in 1917 prohibiting the emigration of Indian labor, the relation of India with the colonies has undergone great changes. The status of India in the Empire has been raised by such incidents as the participation of India in the Imperial War Council at London and in the Peace Conference at Paris. India has also a new constitution by which the people have some voice in certain affairs of the provincial governments.

The restriction of emigration from India created labor shortage in some of the colonies. In 1918, a committee was formed in London to devise means for assisted emigration in the place of indenture.

In 1919, a new complication arose between the colonists and the Indians in South Africa. It resulted in the appointment of a select committee, which was followed by the passage of the Asiatic Amendment Act. The provisions of the act being unsatisfactory, the Union Government appointed a commission to which India sent two representatives. Both the colonists and the Indians prepared themselves to present their respective case to the commission. A South African League was formed in the Transvaal to combat the "Asiatic menace". On the other hand, an Indian National Congress was also held at Johannesburg, at which delegates from all parts of the Union were



present. The congress passed several resolutions, demanding among other things the abolition of all disabilities and the granting of full civic rights.

In the meantime, fresh grievances appeared in Kenya or British East Africa. The discovery in 1902 that the uplands could be settled by European colonists led to the adoption by the Kenya Government of a policy of segregating and disfranchising the Indians. As the policy became manifested through the increasing disabilities on the part of the Indians, a British East Africa Indian Association was at once formed for the preservation of their interests. The association made strong representation to the Secretary of State for India and sent a deputation to the people and the Government of India in 1919. While the Indians in Kenya started a strong agitation, protest meetings were held all over India by the public, Merchants' Association and other organised bodies. The British Foreign Secretary sent a dispatch to the Governor of Kenya on behalf of the Indians in 1920. But the dispatch proving to be highly unsatisfactory, the Indians in Kenya held meeting after meeting protesting against segregation and disfranchisement and threatening boycott and non-cooperation unless grievances were redressed.

The commission appointed by the Union Government was at last convened in 1920. One of the recommendations was the voluntary repatriation. The Union Government at once acted on the recommendation, and about 18,000 Indians were voluntarily repatriated. Meanwhile the indenture system came to an end in British Guiana in 1919 and in Fiji 1920. The Government of India passed a law early in 1922 by which the indentured system was completely abolished.



CHAPTER IV. THE ORGANISATION PERIOD. 1918—

Fundamental Causes.

The first labor union was formed in 1890 and the second in 1910, as we have seen. The latter is still in existence as an influential organisation. In the meantime a few Indians resident in England and their English friends became interested in the Indian labor question. They founded, in 1911, an organisation called the Workers' Welfare League of India with the object of bringing about "a unity of the working and living conditions of Indian and British labor". While in England, several Indians who eventually took active part in the labor movement, were connected with this league. But none of these unions made much impression upon the working classes. The reason is obvious. Laborers were still unconscious of its real interest and of its latent power.

The fundamental causes of the labor movement in this period were the unfavorable conditions of work and living. The growth of industrialism and the increasing solidarity among employers made their conditions worse. They were quite helpless to remedy their grievances by concerted action. During the war the situation, however, underwent a radical change. Several elements brought about a revolution in the social, political, and industrial life of India. First, the Great War, which stirred the whole world, affected also the masses of India, who had to bear the burden of recruitment, loans and taxes. Second, the national movement became very strong in power and adopted defying methods for



the achievement of Swaraj. Third, some of the repressive measures of the British Government, such as the martial law, Jallianwalabagh massacre, Rowlatt acts and imprisonment of national leaders, aroused a spirit of defiance among the people. Fourth, the agitation against the discrimination by colonies and dominions mentioned before, created a feeling of national self-respect on the one hand, and of sympathy and responsibility toward the laboring classes on the other. The last, but not the least, was the revolution in Russia, especially the establishment of the soviet republic, which awakened hope for a new social order.

The new consciousness among the masses, of which the laboring classes, especially in the cities, were the most important, gave rise to new ideals and aspirations. With a body of intellectuals being bent on upbuilding a new national life and sympathetic toward laborers, a ground was prepared for a new direction of the movement, which soon entered into a new epoch.

Industrial Unionism.

The first and foremost effect of this new consciousness was a strong desire for organisation. During the war, India was cut off from Great Britain and other Western countries upon which she depended for her manufactures. On the other hand, she had to supply material for the campaign in Western Asia and Africa. This gave a new impetus to the growth of both industrialism and capitalism. The laboring classes found themselves helpless more than ever. The only recourse left to them was to solidify their rank by trade unionism.

The first industrial union was formed, on April 27, 1918, by Mr. B. P. Wadia among the textile workers



of the mills at Coolai, Madras. By 1919, there were 4 unions in the Presidency of Madras with a membership of 20,000. Among the chief unions might be mentioned those of tramwaymen, printers, rikshamen, aluminium workers, motor drivers, scavengers or street cleaners, and metal and iron workers.

From Madras, the movement for unionism spread to other parts of the country. Similar unions were formed in Bombay, Calcutta, Ahmedabad and other important industrial centres. In a short time there was scarcely any industry in India, which was not organised in some form or other.

Labor Revolt.

The second effect of the new consciousness was the growth of the spirit of defiance and restlessness. The wages of the workers in modern industries were higher than those of the same classes of people in other industries. But their standard of living also became higher, especially under the influence of the urban life. During the war prices began to increase much faster than the wages. Although the employers made enormous profits, they failed to grant an increase in proportion to the rise in prices. On the other hand, the increasing industrial activities brought into the industrial centres many new workers who were housed together with the old workers, thus making already crowded dwellings still more congested.

With the social mind surcharged with war spirit, political agitation and revolutionary ideal, the laboring classes could no longer remain patient and tolerant under the old social wrongs, and the new economic disabilities. Victimised for centuries, they



were at last determined to assert their manhood, and revolted against the modern industrial system which was the immediate cause of their grievances.

Unionism gave them a new weapon. But it was only one of the means. What they unconsciously realised was to demand the rights and privileges as workers of an industrial organisation, citizens of a State and members of a society. Many unions were nothing but strike committees. Often they failed to formulate their grievances and give even formal notice of their strikes. When asked for, they could not give reasons for strikes. At the time of settlement, they would shift ground and make extravagant claims. It was only natural for a group of men who were impelled by an inner spiritual force not to be able to analyse their grievances in any known economic terms.

This spirit of revolt has been latent for sometime, but it became manifest only in the latter part of the year 1919. Under this spirit, the workers started strike after strike, until like an epidemic, it spread all over the country, paralysing the whole industrial organisation. Some conception of the intensity and extensity of the strikes of this period may be had from the following data: November 24 to December 2, 1919, woolen mills, Cawnpore, 17,000 men out; December 7, 1919, to January 9, 1920, railway workers, Jamalpur, 16,000 men out; January 9 to 18, 1920, jute mills, Calcutta, 35,000 men out; January 2 to February 3, general strike, Bombay, 200,000 men out; January 20 to 31, mill workers, Rangoon, 20,000 men out; January 31, British India Navigation Company, Bombay, 10,000 men out; January 26 to February 16, mill workers, Sholapur, 16,000 men out; February 2 to 16, Indian Marine Dock workers, 20,000 men out; February 24 to



March 29, Tata Iron and Steel workers, 40,000 men out; March 9, mill workers, Bombay, 60,000 men out; March 20 to 26, mill workers, Madras, 17,000 men out; May, 1920, mill workers, Ahmedabad, 25,000 men out.

Trade Unionism.

While the labor revolt was manifesting itself almost all over the country and destroying the old industrial relationship, some constructive work was also being done in some industrial centres. In December, 1919, a conference of the Bombay workers was held at which 75 factories were represented. They drew up a memorandum demanding reduction in the working hours, an increase in the rest period, and compulsory education of factory children.

A more important work was, however, begun at Ahmedabad by Mr. M. K. Gandhi, who organised laborers into trade unionism. Trade unions, in the technical sense of the word, have appeared more at Ahmedabad than at any other part of India. On February 25 and 26, 1920, a spinners' union and a weavers' union were respectively formed by Mr. Gandhi. The same month saw the rise of folders' union. In March, June and August of the same year were formed the unions of sizers, winders, carders, blowers and framers. At the end of 1920, the membership of the trade unions rose to 16,450 and the funds to Rs. 54,797. About 43 per cent of the factory workers at Ahmedabad were organised by the end of 1920. By the middle of 1921, the membership rose to 20,000 and the funds to Rs. 75,000. More than half of the Ahmedabad factory workers joined trade unions of some kind or other.



Federation of Unions.

At the very outset, when industrial unions were being formed at Madras, the tendency of federation became evident. This was partly due to the fact that the same leaders were interested in several unions. They found it more convenient to have a central organisation of all the unions for the economy of time and for the purpose of control. But the effectiveness of class solidarity as means of attaining aims of labor was the driving force which united the unions into federation.

Cities began to federate local unions almost simultaneously with the growth of trade unions. Most of the large cities have one or more federations of trade or labor unions. Madras, for instance, has its Central Labor Board and Bombay has the Bombay Central Labor Board and the Bombay Central Labor Federation. From cities the scope of federation was extended to the country and also to the provinces, as we shall see.

Court Injunction.

The spirit of defiance on the part of the workers as expressed in constant disputes and the willingness on the part of the intellectuals to lead and organise the workers could not long remain unopposed by employers. They looked for an opportunity and it was soon found.

A dispute between employers and employees in the Buckingham mills at Madras was followed by both lockout and strike, in which trade unions took active part. The company brought a suit against Mr. B. P. Wadia and other leaders of trade unions. The High Court of Madras decided against them and brought in a judgment of a fine of £ 7,000 and the cost and put the union leaders under injunction.



The company consented not to prosecute the judgment further on the condition that Mr. Wadia would sever all his connection with the labor movement. Mr. Wadia agreed to the proposition and the employers acquired a very successful weapon in the form of injunction for coping with unionism.

Injunction against trade unionism in India was disapproved of by the labor party in Great Britain. A deputation of the Trades Union Congress Parliamentary Committee waited upon the Secretary of State for India on March 22, 1921, and, pointing out the injustice of injunction against the young trade unionism movement, asked for a legislation for the recognition of trade unions with a principal provision that they would have power to sue and to be sued. The Secretary of State promised early consideration of the matter by the Government of India.

All-India Trade Union Congress.

Meanwhile the labor movement went on its course with a more constructive policy. It assumed its national importance in 1920, when the first All-India Trade Union Congress was held at Bombay from October 31 to November 2, with Lala Lajpat Rai as its president and Mr. Joseph Baptista its vice president. A standing committee was appointed to manage the affairs of the congress during the following year and to further the cause of labor until a permanent constitution was adopted. The most important subjects of discussion were shorter hours, higher wages, better housing, medical help in sickness and accident, and old age and maternal benefits.

The second All-India Trade Union Congress was held at Jharna, a small coal town in Bengal, from November 30 to December 2, 1921. There were



10,000 delegates from about 100 unions representing about 1,000,000 members and all the provinces. There was a local strike in the coal fields and over 10,000 striking miners attended the sessions in a body. Mr. Joseph Baptista was elected president. A constitution of the Congress was accepted. Most of the discussions centred on such topics as hours, housing, wages, disputes and conciliation. Resolutions were passed expressing sympathy for the Russian famine. A call was also made to the workers of the world to devise means for abolishing the war.

Mr. Baptista in the course of his presidential address suggested that Government should establish a ministry of labor and hoped that the Congress would develop a national organ of labor, in which the cooperative, trade unionism and socialistic movements would be represented. He considered the presence of outsiders in the union desirable as they constituted an impartial element and as in a trade dispute they would represent the consumers' interests. He also suggested that labor should insist upon giving effect to some of the conventions and recommendations of the international labor conferences.

Mr. Chaman Lal, Secretary of the Trade Union Congress, showed the importance of organised labor to the national movement which could not achieve the Swaraj or self-government without its help. He also warned that unless the economic conditions were improved, the Indian workers would use direct methods and establish Bolshevism or workers' rule.

Provincial Conference.

With the formation of the All-India Trade Union Congress, which is the national organisation of labor, the spirit of federation received a new impetus. Between the city and national federations, there



remained a gap, which was soon filled up by the formation of provincial federations. The importance of provincial organisation becomes evident, when the question of language is taken into consideration. There is no common language throughout the country. Although a province may have more than one language, they are more or less understandable to all classes of the people within the province.

Provincial federation has been started in Bengal, and the first Bengal Trade Union Conference was held in Calcutta, April 4, 1922. A large number of delegates representing 15 unions, including mercantile clerks, tramway men, iron workers and seamen was present. The Conference was presided over by Raja Monindra Chandra Sinha. Several resolutions were passed demanding legal recognitions of trade unions, the repeal of workmen's breach of contract act and the enactment of workman's compensation act.

Labor Legislation.

Another important activity of the labor movement is the improvement of labor conditions by progressive legislation. Labor legislation has its beginning in the indentured system which was created early in the thirties of the last century. The supply of labor to the tea gardens and to the mines also called for new legislation. All these laws were enacted without any influence by laborers themselves. In the later legislations, the wishes of the laborers had to be taken into consideration. In the recent years, the laborers are taking an active part in influencing legislation on their own behalf.

The first factory act of 1881 was amended in 1891 and 1911. But after the amendment of 1911, the conditions of the country altogether changed. The growth of trade unionism and of the public



opinion within the country and the international labor conferences without brought in new forces in the movement for factory legislation. These forces led to the fourth factory act, which was passed early in 1922. The chief provision of the act are the reduction in the working hours of adults from 72 to 60 a week and the increase in the minimum and maximum ages of children from 9 and 14 to 12 and 15 respectively.

Another important legislation, in the enactment of which labor leaders are at present interested, is that for the registration and protection of trade unions. On March 1, 1921, a resolution for such legislation was accepted by the Government of India. On September 12, 1921, the Government of India asked the Provincial Governments to gather opinions and suggestions of the organised bodies and influential persons, interested in the question. The matter is still under consideration.

Labor leaders are also agitating for such legislations as workmen's compensation act and minimum wage act. Recently a resolution was brought forward in the Bengal Legislative Assembly for fixing a minimum wage in all industries including plantations. Although the resolution was lost, it marks the beginning of a new tendency in the Indian labor movement.

Labor Representation.

Another indication of the influence of the labor movement is shown by the recognition Indian labor has recently received at all national and international labor conferences. In all the important industrial conferences of the recent years such as those of the International Labor at Washington, D. C., Genoa, and Geneva, Indian Labor was equally represented with



capital. In all these representations the labor organisations had at least the nominal right of selecting their representatives.

Labor has also been recognised by the national and provincial governments. Labor has its own representatives at the legislative assemblies. Most of the resolutions for labor legislation in the recent years have been brought forward by the representatives of the working classes.

Women's Union.

One of the most far reaching steps taken by the labor movement in India is that of unionising female workers. A considerable number of women find work in agriculture, but their number is very much limited in organised industries, such as factories and mines. Recently, women are entering into such occupations, as teaching and stenography.

Attempt has already been made in unionising these woman workers. On April 22, 1922, the female workers of Bombay met with the object of organising clerical workers of the city. The meeting was presided over by Mr. Joseph Baptista, President of the All-Indian Trade Union Congress. This is only the beginning. There is no doubt that a strong organisation of women will sooner or later grow and play a very important role in the Indian labor movement.

Nationalisation of Unions.

The trade unions had already been federated into local, provincial, and national federations, as we have seen. There was still a defect in the labor organisations of India. Some of the industries, such as transportation, are national in character. They can be dealt with only by the national organisation. All-India Trade Union Congress is more or less weak



in dealing with a particular industry. The latest tendency in the labor movement is to remedy this defect.

During the last week of December, 1922, there was held at Lahore a conference for the amalgamation of the northern and southern federations of railwaymen's unions into the All-India Railwaymen's Federation under the chairmanship of Mr. C. F. Andrews. The intention of the national federation is to represent the workers of all railways in India and Burma and to have a Central Standing Committee at Delhi, which will directly and constitutionally deal with the Railway Board and transact other business. Steps have been taken for organisation of this national federation.

The Present Status.

The number of trade unions all over India is not definitely known. The trade union members all over the country amounted to about 500,000. By the end of 1921, there were about 77 unions with a membership of over 1,000,000 persons, of which 108,073 were in the Presidency of Bombay. According to the latest report of the secretary of All-India Trade Union Congress, the number of trade unions in the whole country has risen to 113.



PART. II. NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE.

CHAPTER V.

CHARACTER AND CLASSIFICATION.

General Features.

The labor movement in India falls into three distinct periods according to the principal forces which have influenced its course. The fundamental cause of the labor movement was the presence of women and children in factories and the main object of the first period was the regulation of child and woman labor. It began in 1875, when the first factory commission was appointed by the Government of Bombay and came to an end in 1891, when the second factory act was passed. It was revived to regulate the labor of adult males, but its chief object had been attained and another powerful force had already come to play a more important role in the movement. It, therefore, lost its vitality and gradually subsided.

As indicated above, the origin of the modern laboring classes might be traced to the early part of the 19th century. Yet it was not until the seventies that the labor movement had its start. The reasons for its absence in the earlier years are obvious. The people were still unconscious of their political and industrial goal and their activities were limited only to such social spheres as education, religion and reform. The laboring classes themselves were weak and scattered and did not know how to remedy their grievances.

The philanthropic agitation was the forerunner of the modern labor movement. Having originated in philanthropy, its motive force was sympathy rather than justice. Appeal to the government for legislation was the chief aim. All the agitations and conferences



were organised with this object in view. But it failed to comprehend the real meaning of the labor question.

The fundamental cause of the movement in the second period was the indentured system and the main object was to abolish it. It started in 1891, when the Natal Government first began to pass discriminating laws against the Indians. Such laws were passed by the Transvaal Government as early as 1883. But the Transvaal being outside of the British Empire at that time, and the number of the Indians there being very small, they failed to raise any effective opposition on the part of the Indians. The period ended in 1917, when the emigration of labor from India was prohibited as a war measure. The act abolishing the system was finally passed early in 1922. The problem of the Indians in British colonies is still an acute one. But it has become more or less a racial question and divested itself of the economic aspects.

The second period of the movement was politico-economic. Discrimination against the Indians abroad was a national question and the main spring of the movement was the wounded national pride. But connected with it was the ignominy of the indentured system. It was this mixed feeling which led to the nation-wide agitation for the abolition of the system. Like the first period, the movement in this period failed to understand the interest of labor as such. But the agitation opened the eyes of the people toward the labor condition at home and abroad. It created a sympathetic atmosphere and prepared the ground for the new period.

The underlying cause of the movement in the third period is the growth of modern industrialism and of class solidarity among the employers on the



one hand and the rise of a new class-consciousness among the working classes on the other. The main purpose is to organise laboring classes in order to establish collective bargaining in modern industries. It began in 1918 and is still in the process of development. The motive force of the movement is the new socio-economic ideal which has been gradually dawning upon the country for a past generation or two. The political conditions have offered a new background. Although the leaders have come from outside, it is the movement of the rank and file of the working classes, and it is their active cooperation which made it so formidable in the course of a few years. Unlike the movement of the previous periods, the movement of this period is fully class-conscious. It realises the causes of the workers' grievances and apprehends their goal.

Labor Organisations.

A movement generally implies organisation through which its function may be carried out and its aims may be achieved. Although the labor movement started in 1875, it was not until a decade and a half later that organisations began to appear. As it was at first under the direction of the philanthropists, who were outsiders, the necessity of organisation was not realised.

There were still other reasons for the lack of organisation. A labor organisation makes its appearance under several conditions, such as the existence of a more or less permanent class, consciousness of class interests and the ability to maintain such interests. Until recently, none of these conditions existed in India. Moreover, the wages of the workers in modern industries were higher than those of the same class of people in old industries.



There were not, therefore, sufficient grievances to make them class conscious and to lead them to class organisation. In recent years, there have been considerable changes in the conditions of workers and in their relationship with employers, such as the expansion of industrialism, development of a definite labor policy among the employers, rise in the standard of living among the workers and higher cost of living. There has, therefore, been a decided change in the character of the labor movement.

In the first period, the labor union, like that of the Bombay Millhands' Association of 1890, was only a loosely organised body. There was lack of a definite aim and constitution. The officers worked mostly in the advisory capacity. But their function in the labor movement cannot be minimised. They brought the labor question to the attention of the Government and attempted to formulate the grievances and sentiments of the laboring classes in definite shape. The second period being mostly a movement of the intellectuals did not lead to the rise of any labor organisation in the strict sense of the word. But many social and political organisations took active part in the movement and even the press for the first time became interested in the labor question. In the third period, the movement divested itself of the social and political domination of the first two periods and assumed its economic nature. In order to establish collective bargaining into modern industries and to realise its other aims, it made unionisation of labor its immediate object and organised laboring classes all over the country.

The present labor organisations in India may be divided into the following groups: First, craft or trade unions, such as spinners' unions and weavers' unions. Second, crafts or trades unions, such as the



Bombay Central Labor Board and All-India Trade Union Congress. Third, industrial unions, such as railway workers' unions and printers' unions. Fourth, labor unions, such as the Bombay Millhands' Association and Workers' Welfare Association.¹

Almost all the labor unions are well organised. Most of them have such officers as presidents, vice presidents, treasurers and secretaries, some of whom come from outside. There are also advisory bodies or committees, the members of which are mostly the workers themselves. The members generally pay fees. In large cities like Bombay and Ahmedabad, all the unions are federated into one or more organisations. Such federations may be either independent, as the Central Labor Board at Bombay, or may be affiliated with the All-India Trade Union Congress, as the Central Labor Federation also of Bombay.

Some idea of the nature of the labor federation may be had from the constitution of the Bombay Labor Board. Any labor union in the Presidency of Bombay may be affiliated with it on the payment of an admission fee of ten rupees and on furnishing satisfactory information on the following: First, the aims and objects of the union. Second, the actual number of the members at the time of affiliation, monthly subscription received from the members, and the names of the office-bearers. Third, the willingness of the union to abide by the rules of the Board.

¹ A craft or trade union is an organisation of the workers of a single occupation. A crafts or trades union is the federation of unions in different occupations. An industrial union is an organisation of the workers in the same industry. A labor union is an organisation of workers irrespective of occupations.



The outstanding feature of the labor organisations in India is that the majority of them are industrial unions. There are several reasons for the preponderance of this form of unions. First, there already exists some kind of trade unionism in the form of the caste guild. Second, the laborers in each trade or craft have not attained the stage of development and specialisation which creates rivalry and calls for the protection of the craft interests by organisation. Third, the leaders of labor organisations are mostly outsiders, and as such, they are interested in the laboring class as a whole, rather than in any branch of it. Fourth, the tendency of the modern labor movements abroad toward industrial unionism has also influenced the aims and methods of the labor leaders in India.

Recently there has been, however, a tendency toward trade or craft unions. The essential cause of their growth is the influence of the British Labor Movement, which has been taken as a model by some of the Indian labor leaders. The encouragement given by British employers, managers, and officials in India toward the growth of trade unionism is also responsible for the growth of such a tendency. As the skill of the workers develops, and as they become more and more class-conscious, there is every likelihood that such unions will also become larger in number.

Along with the growth of craft unions, there is also growing a tendency for federation and nationalisation. Craft unions with their conflicting interests might split up the labor camp and weaken the movement. The local unions are also unable to deal with centralised and nationalised industries. But when federated and nationalised, they become all the more powerful. The federation of labor unions into pro-



vincial and national organisations is the most significant feature of the Indian labor movement at present.

Welfare Work.

Welfare work for the benefit of laborers has been almost co-existent with the growth of some of the modern industries, such as cotton and jute manufactures. Some of the large factories have departments for such welfare work as housing, medical help and night school. There have also been formed in the last two or three decades private organisations in several provinces. Among the most prominent organisations might be mentioned the Bombay Social Service League and the Bengal Social Welfare League.

The significance of the welfare work movement is seen in the formation of the All-Indian Welfare Association, which had its first conference at Bombay on April 6, 1922. There were representatives from six local governments. The subjects discussed in the conference comprised of such subjects as sanitation and hygiene, housing, consumers' cooperation, and works committees.

The welfare work in India has taken a much more comprehensive view than the similar movement in Western countries. It consists of two kinds of activities, those inside the factory and those outside, as the president of the All-India Industrial Welfare Conference at Bombay put it. There is no doubt that some of the activities, such as regulation of hours, insurance against old age and sickness, and housing, will ameliorate the conditions of workers.

The importance of welfare work as a means of redressing some of the grievances of workers cannot be minimised, especially under the present social and



economic conditions of India. Charity is a part of both Hindu and Mohammedan religions. The inhabitants of the community have always taken care of their dependents and been interested in other charitable work. It is, therefore, only natural that social and economic conditions of a large number of urban population would give rise to organised charity, at which the welfare workers in different parts of the country are aiming.

Welfare work or philanthropy as a method of solving the labor problem is, however, quite inadequate. At best, it is only a palliative measure. It deals with the symptoms rather than with the diseases. The wage-earning classes are the products of the modern industrial organisation, and any permanent change in their conditions can be brought about only by a change in the economic institutions.

The main spring of welfare work is fellow-feeling, while that of the labor movement is social justice. The former takes the present status of workers for granted, while the latter attempts to create a new status for the workers. Moreover, the object of welfare work by the Government and employers is to check the progress of the labor movement rather to confer real benefit to the working classes. As such, the labor movement is quite distinct from the welfare work, although their activities may sometimes overlap.

Cooperative Societies.

Another movement which is keeping pace with the labor movement is that of cooperation. Cooperation in the sense of mutual help is the very essence of the social and industrial organisation of India. It is as true of the village as of the town. With such a background, it is only natural that the modern



cooperative societies will grow in India with a tremendous rapidity.

The first cooperative act was passed in 1904, and the work of organisation began shortly after. This act restricted the cooperative activities only to credit organisations. This defect was remedied by the act of 1912, when the provisions of the law were extended to the formation of other kinds of cooperative societies. In 1910—11, there were 5,321 societies with a membership of 395,058 persons. In 1919—20, the number of the societies grew into 37,254, and the membership into 1,520,376. During the same period the amount of the loans issued to members and other societies increased from £ 1,131,522 to £ 8,076,247.

The most important class of co-operative societies in India is that related to credit. Indian ryot was perpetually in debt, and it was to relieve him from such a condition that the first cooperative societies were started. At present there are also other cooperative societies such as those for purchasing, selling, and insuring. The importance of such societies in the industrial reconstruction of India cannot be over-estimated. In fact, cooperation is one of the most important movements in India to-day.

The present cooperative movement of India is, however, quite different from the labor movement. The pivotal point of the modern industrial society is the wage system. It is to this that the modern working classes owe their origin. None of the creditors', distributors', or producers' societies touches upon the wage question, and as such, they have very little, if any, direct influence upon the labor movement. The most important cooperative movement, which partakes of the nature of the labor movement, is the consumers' cooperation. Such a co-



operative movement has already appeared in India, as described below.

Labor and Radicalism.

One of the outstanding features of the labor movement in India is the absence of radicalism. Practically all the unions have collective bargaining as their goal. They accept the modern capitalistic and the wage systems as more or less permanent institutions and attempt to improve the lot of workers under them.

The absence of radicalism from the labor movement may be accounted for on several grounds. First, the national movement for self-government has absorbed the time and energy of the majority of the people, leaving other movements in a comparative weak condition for full and rapid development. Second, the evils of modern industrialism have not appeared to the same extent in India as in the Western countries. Third, the actual wage-earning class in India is still very small in number and weak in power. They have not, therefore, attempted to achieve their aims by subverting the existing social order. Fourth, in spite of considerable progress in many branches of science and philosophy, revolutionary doctrine did not make much headway in India. Without a proper philosophical background, there was not much chance for the development of revolutionary ideals which could be realised in practice.

The first signs of the revolutionary movement in India may, however, be noticed in a few consumers' co-operative societies. So long as they produce whatever they consume and eliminate profit from the productive system, they undermine the capitalistic system and, as such, are revolutionary



in character, although peaceful. Such cooperative societies are small in size and few in number. But India with her village system and her spirit of collectivism offers a fertile soil for the growth of such societies. The mushroomlike growth of creditors' and producers' co-operative societies within the last two decades warrants such statement. The growth of consumers' co-operative societies in India is only a question of time.

As to the other forms of the revolutionary labor movement, such as socialism, syndicalism, and guild socialism, nothing has as yet taken any definite shape. But the philosophy of these movements has already imbued the thoughts of several labor leaders. The most important factor of the rise of radical doctrine in India is the Soviet Government of Russia which is only a neighboring State. Quite a few young Indians are also taking active part in the revolutionary movements in foreign countries. Sooner or later such movements will find their place in India.



CHAPTER VI.

AIMS AND METHODS.

Three distinct forces directed the course of the labor movement and gave rise to three immediate objects, such as the regulation of child and woman labor, the abolition of the indentured system, and the unionisation of the laboring classes, as we have seen. While these were the principal objects, there were also many other objects in which the workers were vitally interested. These objects might be grouped into three classes, primary, secondary and ultimate.

Primary Objects.

The primary objects are concerned with the solution of the problems arising from the economic status of the workers under the modern system of production and distribution. Being the outcome of modern industrialism, they are more or less similar in nature in all industrially developed countries. The most important of these objects are those related to such questions as hours of work, health and safety, employment and discipline, wages and income, trade unionism, and collective bargaining. Some idea of the primary objects of the Indian labor movement may be had from the demands the workers made, or the aims they formulated, from time to time.

The workers of Bombay in the first period included among their aims such primary objects as a weekly holiday, a rest period of a half hour at midday, regular payment of wages, and a fixed hour for the commencement of work.

The objects of the movement in the second period were both political and economic. The primary objects of the Indians in South Africa comprised of such demands as the abolition of the poll tax, the



eradication of the racial element as a principle of legislation, the recognition of the validity of Indian marriage and the equitable administration of all laws affecting Indian immigrants.

The scope of the labor movement in the third period widened much further and the objects also became much more diversified. Among the primary objects might be mentioned the following: abolition of corporal punishment in the case of children, eight hour day and overtime for more than 8 hours and for Sundays, payment of wages by the week, a minimum wage for every branch of industry, compensation for sickness and accidents, equitable rates for granting bonus, a month's vacation with full pay, improvement of housing conditions, recognition of unions, participation in the management of those branches of industry in which the workers are vitally interested, organisation of the workers irrespective of caste and creed into one common group, maintenance of sickness and benefit funds, removal by lawful and constitutional means of the workers' disabilities in regard to work and wages, and training of workers for leadership.

Secondary Objects.

The secondary objects are concerned with the solution of those problems which arise from the social and political conditions of the workers. They are dependent upon the stage of social development and are, therefore, different in different countries. Among them are to be included the educational and cultural aspects of life. They form a part of the aim of the labor movement, for they are the indirect results of the economic conditions.

In the first period, the secondary objects were mostly concerned with the education of children. In the second period, the assertion of the social and



political rights of the Indian immigrants in the British colonies became necessary owing to the racio-political nature of the question. In the third period, the secondary objects have become much broader and have become concerned with such aims as the improvement of the social and political conditions of the workers.

A rough idea of the secondary objects of the movement may be had from the aims formulated by various labor unions. Of these the most important are the following: general education, political enfranchisement, education and training in civic virtues and social duties, establishment of social centres for the cultural and recreative purposes, creation of new ideals and aspirations, and socialisation of science and philosophy for the benefit of the workers.

Some of the labor unions were formed with these primary and secondary objects in view. The Bombay Central Labor Board, for instance, defined the following aims: the study of the labor question, collection of statistics in order to form a correct idea of the conditions of workers, propaganda work for the welfare of labor, organisation of new unions and the strengthening of the old ones, coordination of different unions and the protection of their rights, promotion of the moral status of the working classes by organising temperance and other similar movements, and the establishment of schools, libraries, and other similar institutions for the benefit of laborers.¹

Ultimate Objects.

The ultimate objects are those ideals which spring from the spiritual hankerings of man and which are more or less intangible. They may not be realised in

¹ Bombay Labor Gazette, March, 1922, pp. 14--15.



any material sense of the term, but they add a spiritual meaning to a movement and raise it to the highest pitch of human passion. The ultimate objects of all labor movements are the achievement of that stage of society in which all men and women have equal opportunity for the highest and richest expression of life. These objects have been expressed in the aspirations for the political, industrial and social democracy. The labor movement in India has also been more or less imbued with these ideals.

The conditions of India have not been favorable for the growth of the ideal for political democracy. But the Indian labor has already realised the significance of political equality. Industrial democracy is still more important to the workers. Like political democracy, it has also been only vaguely conceived of by the workers of India. The injustice of the modern distributive system has, however, not been clearly manifested to some of the leaders. Social democracy is possibly the highest ideal of the labor movement. The caste system and the untouchability of the majority of the people have naturally led to such an ideal. Under the influence of Mr. Gandhi, universal brotherhood has, therefore, been one of the ideals of the labor movement in India.

Means of Attainment.

The labor movement is primarily guided by the doctrine of opportunism. It adapts itself to a particular occasion to achieve its aims. It assumes dictatorship whenever possible, compromises whenever necessary, and even takes dictation when no other alternative presents itself. The labor movement in India is no exception to this general rule.

The Indian movement has been generally peaceful and constitutional. Violent and revolutionary



methods have been practically avoided. The lack of full consciousness of their latent power may partly account for the absence of revolutionary and violent methods, but the religious teachings of the country and the influence of Mr. Gandhi are also partly responsible.

Appeal to Authorities.

One of the most important means of the labor movement has been to appeal to the Government. It consists of memorials, petitions and deputations. In the early stage of the movement, it was extensively resorted to. The lack of any class organisation and the comparatively weakness of the laboring classes led to the adoption of such a method. It was also the general custom with the people to appeal to the British Government for the redress of their grievances. The working classes only followed the general custom of the country.

The Indians in South Africa had naturally to depend a good deal upon this method. Some of the problems they wanted to solve required the intervention of the Imperial Government. The indentured system itself was created by law and no redress of the grievances could be achieved without Government intervention. Thus Mr. Gandhi himself made several appeals to the British, South African and Indian Governments. On the other hand, deputations were also sent to the Indian people which was the final authority to decide the question and it was through their agitation that the indentured system was finally abolished.

Appeals to employers for minor concessions or for the settlement of disputes are also occasionally adopted by the laborers of all classes.



Press and Platform.

The most important methods at the hands of the labor movement, in fact of any movement or organisation, are the press and the platform, both of which are lately being well utilised by labor leaders in India. In the world of labor, agitation and education are practically synonymous. Agitation has fourfold function: First, to formulate grievances for effective demand. Second, to create new ideals and aspirations. Third, to present the case of labor to the authorities including the Government and the employer. Fourth, to educate the public to the needs and grievances of the working classes and to win their sympathy, which is the deciding factor in all labor disputes. All these functions have been dominant in the agitations by the Indian workers.

The importance of the labor press was realised even in the early period of the movement. The *Dinabandhu* of Mr. Lokhanday, in 1890, and the *Labor News* of the Workers' Welfare Association in 1910 are the examples of the fact. In the recent years the general press of the country has taken up the cause of labor. The labor press itself has also grown in power.

The platform has been the much more effective method of labor agitation. The labor movement began in mass-meetings and they are its chief support even to-day. It is the only means to the majority of the workers in India who are mostly illiterate.

Civil Disobedience.

The most important method used by the Indians in South Africa was civil disobedience which is a form of passive resistance. It was first inaugurated by Mr. Gandhi in 1907 and marked an epoch in the history of the labor movement. By



defying the arbitrary laws which were revolting to all legal and ethical codes, Mr. Gandhi gave the Indian workers one of the greatest weapons in industrial warfare. In passive resistance, the weak and helpless found a means of preserving self-respect and succeeded in having some of their grievances mitigated. It was a triumph of moral force against the brute force.

In the recent agitation against the British Government, Mr. Gandhi utilised his experience in South Africa and introduced non-cooperation movement. In many disputes, the spirit of passive resistance was quite evident. Some of the disputes were won by this method.

Strikes and Boycotts.

The significance of strikes and boycotts as a method of winning their cause has been fully understood by the working classes, as will be seen in a subsequent chapter. When strikes and boycotts bring an industry to a standstill, the employer is bound to listen to the grievances of labor, of which he is otherwise neglectful. They have been in use for over a generation and have been taken advantage of by all classes of workers including indentured laborers in South Africa, plantation laborers in Assam, and miners in Bengal.

Legislative Methods.

Legislation as a method of solving some of the problems of labor has become well-known to the leaders. In fact, it was the only method known to the movement in the beginning. Some of the grievances of labor cannot be remedied without State intervention and the best way the Government can intervene under the present conception of the State is to pass regulative measures.



The labor leaders in India have already felt the necessity of taking active part in labor legislation. They have representatives in both national and provincial legislatures.

Political Control.

One of the best means of enhancing the cause of labor is political control. The formation of a political party for the cause of labor is a well known phenomenon in Europe and America. That India would have her own labor party is only a question of time. This is especially so because some of the labor leaders had their training in England, where the labor party has become so strong and influential in the recent years. There is already a strong desire on the part of some labor leaders in India to take active part in politics. They are waiting for an opportune time, which Swaraj or national government will undoubtedly bring.



CHAPTER VII. CONFLICT AND CONCILIATION.

Class Struggle.

In the first period, petitioning and memorialising were the chief methods of realising the aims of the labor movement. There was scarcely any chance for the development of industrial warfare. There were of course minor grievances, which sometimes led to strikes and lockouts, but they were small and local. The class struggle between labor and capital was, therefore, insignificant.

In the second period, the labor movement covered a wide range, and was carried on in three or four different continents, — partly in the British Colonies of Africa and Australia, partly on the Pacific Coast of North America and partly in India itself. Industrial warfare took place on a large scale in such colonies as Natal, the Transvaal, and Fiji. A large number of Indians was imprisoned and the casualties were also great in several cases. It was, however, an uneven fight. On the one side were the colonists, who though in the minority formed the employer and the government at the same time, and on the other side were the Indians without any political and economic status. National consciousness rather than class consciousness formed the background. The struggle was both political and economic.

The third period is, however, quite distinct from the other two. It is the movement in which the laborers themselves have taken more or less active part for the introduction of collective bargaining into modern industries. The employers were averse to recognise the status of labor and to accept the principle of collective bargaining. Wherever they



yielded, they did so under the threat of strikes. It is a period of pure and simple class struggle.

Industrial Disputes.

Strikes and lockouts on a small scale took place in factories and plantations even in the early days of modern industrialism. But there is scarcely any record of them. They received little attention in India --- a country where industrial and labor consciousness was still insignificant. The status of the industrial classes in the Indian society has not been very important, and that of the laboring classes has been still less so. The facilities for the circulation of news were also very much limited. Industrial disputes arose and spread without attracting public attention and getting formal record.

The earliest strikes, for which authentic data are available, took place at the Golam Baba Spinning and Weaving Company Ltd. in 1882. The strike lasted for two days from the 13th to 15th of November. It was soon followed by another strike lasting from the 19th to 24th of December. Between the years 1882 and 1890, there were 25 important strikes recorded in different factories of Bombay and Madras. But minor strikes were more frequent. Most of the strikes lasted only for a day or two and involved only a fraction of the working people of a factory or an industry.

In recent years, strikes have increased tremendously both in number and intensity. In 1905, for instance, there were strikes in several mills of Bombay due to the introduction of electricity making excessive hours possible. In 1907, some of the strikes in Bombay lasted for over a week or so on the question of wages. The factory labor commission found in 1907 that the workers fully understood the

machinery of strikes and had repeatedly forced the employers to comply with their demands. But they were as yet unable to combine over a large area with the object of securing a common end by concerted action.

The first important and widespread strike took place in the summer of 1908, when the mill workers of Bombay went on strike out of sympathy for Mr. Tilak, a foremost political leader, who was sentenced to prison for sedition. About fourfifths of the workers were on strike, but they returned after a day or two.

Strikes increased greatly during the war. In 1917, several strikes took place in important industrial centres, such as Ahmedabad, Madras and Bombay, and the workers obtained some concessions. During 1918, strikes for the advance of wages were frequent, but most of them were amicably settled with the workers receiving an increase of wages. One of the largest strikes took place in Bombay in December, 1918. The trouble began in one of the mills, and gradually the strikers received the support of other mills. By January 9, 1919, about 125,000 workers were out on strike.

It was, however, in the latter part of 1919 and in the first part of 1920 that the disputes between employers and employees became most acute. Labor unions had grown stronger and they stood solidly for fighting out the issue. Strikes and lockouts increased in number until, like epidemics, they spread all over the country.

In the first two months of the year 1920, from January 2 to March 3, there were 124 strikes of which 96 were reported to have occurred in the city of Bombay alone and involved about 300,000 people. During the first six months of 1920, there



were about 200 strikes involving about 1,500,000 employees. From July to December, 1920, there were 119 strikes involving 211,478 employees in the Province of Bengal alone. By the end of the year, there was practically no industry in the Hooghly Basin in which strikes did not occur.

Detailed statistics are available since 1921, when the Labor Office was established by the Government. In 18 months from January, 1921, to June, 1922, there were 559 disputes involving 714,172 persons. Of these disputes, 184 took place in Bengal and 247 in Bombay involving respectively 360,134 and 211,602 persons. 232 disputes occurred in the cotton industry, 55 in the jute industry and the remainder were distributed among such industries as collieries, engineering works, shipping and docks, tramways, railways, tea gardens and printing presses.¹

General Character.

The industrial dispute committee, appointed by the Government of Bombay on July 30, 1921, to report on the methods of settlement of industrial disputes, made the following characterisation of the strikes in the Bombay Presidency:

- (1) The frequency of the strikes without notice.
- (2) The absence of clearly defined grievances before striking.
- (3) The multiplicity and sometimes extravagance of the claims put forward after the strike has begun.
- (4) The absence of any effective organisation, except perhaps at Ahmedabad, to formulate the claims of the operators and to secure respect for any settlement which might be made.

¹ Computed from the quarterly reports in the Journal of Indian Industries and Labor. Some of the disputes have been counted twice.



(5) The increasing solidarity of employers and employees and the capacity of the operatives to remain on strike for considerable periods despite lack of any visible organisation.

The observations of the committee no doubt contain some truth. A large number of strikes took place before the present trade union movement, and there was scarcely any organised body of persons in the executive capacity through which the grievances of the workers could be properly defined and formulated. But the grievances were indeed there and many of them, such as low wages, long hours and bad housings, were known to employers, who ignored them.

Strikes often started for one reason, such as higher wages, and that gave them the opportunity to demand the redress of other grievances. No doubt, the claims of the workers were often extravagant. This was due to the fact that the underlying cause of the labor movement and industrial unrest was not merely for the improvement of working conditions and the increase of wages. It was the inner impulse of the human nature which was just expressing itself among the masses of India. Being spiritual in nature, their demands were naturally vague and extravagant. This has been the characteristic of the labor movement all over the world. The labor organisations in India have not yet come down to the business methods which have already been achieved in Europe and America. One of the reasons is that in all the countries other organisations, such as the socialistic, communistic and anarchistic, give the outlet for such expression.

The most remarkable observation of the committee is that Indian workers can "remain on strike for considerable periods despite any visible or-



ganisation." This shows the intensity of their ideals and aspirations, which are the motive forces of the labor movement.

Principal Causes.

The underlying cause of the labor unrest in India is the class-consciousness which has been slowly growing up among the laboring classes for the last generation, but which was only brought to focus within the last 4 or 5 years by several external and internal forces, as we have seen.

The immediate cause of the strike was, however, economic. The wages of all classes of laborers in India were shamefully low. With the rise in the cost of living, the conditions of the workers became worse and the sufferings increased. It was the dire necessity to make a living that led workers to revolt. All of the 48 strikes, for example, occurring in Bengal in October and November in 1920, arose from demand for higher wages. Of the 559 strikes and lockouts in 1921 and the first half of 1922 all over the country, 245 arose on the question of wages and 83 on the question of bonus.

Besides this essentially economic cause, applicable to all the industries of the country, there were also some specific causes, economic in origin, but peculiar to each industry and locality. Most important of these were long hours and bad housing. Although a large number of industries worked only 9 or 10 hours a day, some of the factories especially those related to cotton manufacturing worked 12 hours a day. As to the condition of housing, nothing could be worse than the Bombay Chawls, which were the veritable slums. It depended upon laborers to remedy these evils.



The rise of the trade or labor unionism itself was a cause of strikes and lockouts. Whenever the workers formed a union, they wanted to present their case to the employers through their leaders. Many employers refused to recognise trade unions and to deal with labor representatives. The only recourse left to the workers was strikes and the employers also resorted to lockouts to break up trade unions. In several cases the employers did not want to take back the ringleaders of previous strikes. The workers had to strike again to reinstate their leaders.

Some of the strikes have been attributed to political causes. It has been said that agitators in order to win "cheap notoriety" took up the labor cause and incited the laborers to the point of striking. When the whole atmosphere of India was surcharged with political agitation, no doubt some of the political leaders might have utilised labor disputes for their own purposes. But even in such cases, the fundamental causes were economic, and the politicians only accentuated the seriousness of the situation.

The new ideals and aspirations with which the working classes have been imbued through the labor movement in the recent years also offered cause for some of the strikes. This can be seen in the demands they made upon employers as conditions for the settlement of some of the strikes. These demands concerned such questions as the participation of labor in the management of those branches of the industry in which workers' welfare was involved, and an annual vacation of one month with pay.

Among the contributory causes of the disputes might be mentioned the following: First, lack of provision for compensation in case of any serious or fatal accident. Second, the summary dismissals of



workers at the option of some employers. Third, occasional withholdings of wages. Fourth, the indifference of some employers to the grievances of their employees. Fifth, ill-treatment of workers by some foremen and managers. Sixth, the failure on the part of some employers to fulfil the agreements entered into as condition for previous strike settlement. Seventh, the sympathy of one group of workers for their fellow-workers.

Chief Results.

It is impossible to measure in any known terms the actual loss which the modern warfare between labor and capital imposes upon society. While the losses in working days, profits, wages, and property, and even life, can be computed in figures, the loss to society through the disturbance of peace and the paralysis of social, political and economic activities, cannot be measured or visualised. Only a great strike like the Bombay general strike shows clearly the inefficiency of the modern industrial organisation by which labor and capital are allowed to match their strength at the expense of society.

The most obvious effect of a strike is the loss of working days. Complete figures for the working days lost in the disputes in India prior to the year 1921 are not available. The Bombay general strike of 1920 alone, which lasted from January 2 to February 3, i. e., 27 actual days of work, and involved about 200,000 laborers, caused a loss of 5,400,000 working days. Since some of the strikes lasted 3 months or over, and the total number of persons involved in the strikes amounted to 1,500,000, the aggregate loss of working days for the first half of the year 1920 must have been enormous. During the second half of the year 1920, the number of



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working days lost through strikes in Bengal alone amounted to 1,052,261. These data are incomplete, several important strikes being still in progress when this estimate was made. The total loss of working days in 1921 was 6,837,862 and in the first half of 1922, 1,305,188.

Very little is known as to the amount of the loss in profits, wages, and property. Nor is it very easy to evaluate such losses. A faint idea may, however, be had from a few fragmentary data. The Buckingham Mills at Madras, for instance, lost a profit of Rs. 10,000 per day. In one of the strikes at Ahmedabad, 32 mills lost Rs. 300,000 in profits and the workers, Rs. 100,000 in wages. The strikes at Bombay was reckoned to have caused a loss of £ 8,000,000 in production alone. The loss in property was not great, although the bulk of the strikes were accomplished by picketing and intimidation was also utilised, actual violence was scarcely resorted to, especially with reference to property.

The most regrettable loss resulting from strikes was through the death of several workers. In such strikes as those in the Tata Iron and Steel Works, the Sholapur strike and the Bombay general strike, several laborers were killed and a large number was wounded. While the loss of life itself is irreparable, the misery and sufferings brought upon the workers' families through the loss of their earning members are also considerable.

The most tangible results of the industrial disputes are to be noted in settlement. In the years 1919 and 1920, the majority of the strikes were settled in favor of the workers. Some of the strikes of the government employees were lost. Of the 164 strikes and lockouts in the Presidency of Bombay from April, 1921, to March, 1922, 54 per cent were



settled in favor of the employers, 15 per cent in favor of the employees, 13 per cent were compromised, and 18 per cent were still in progress without any definite results. The strikes in other parts of the country were, however, settled more in favor of the workers. Of the 559 disputes, most of which were strikes, in 1921 and the first half of 1922 in all India, 105 were successful, 96 partially successful, and 271 unsuccessful, the rest being classed as indefinite, unknown or still in progress.

Immeasurable and irreparable as some of the losses from strikes and lockouts are, they are the inevitable results of the modern system of production and distribution and should be considered in relation to the corresponding gain to the laboring classes. If strikes are the only methods for establishing the industrial status, enhancing the labor cause and improving the labor conditions, they must be regarded as a means to social amelioration.

Industrial Peace.

One of the great problems requiring solution by modern society is to secure industrial peace. This is as true of India as of any other country. As a result of some of the strikes, especially those at Bombay, the importance of devising means for the solution of the problem has been brought to the people of India.

One of the first requirements for the adjustment of labor disputes is the gathering of accurate and impartial data. This can perhaps be better done by the government than by any other agency. The Government of India and the Provincial Governments of Bombay and Madras have already established labor bureaus for this purpose.

In April 1918, long before the first Bombay mill



strike of 1921, Sir Dinsha Wacha, then chairman of the Bombay Millowners' Association, advocated the establishment of a council of experienced arbitrators in whom employers and employees might have the fullest confidence. No immediate step was taken toward the solution of the problem.

Early in the year 1921, a committee was appointed on the recommendation of the Bengal Legislative Council to consider the problem of industrial unrest in Bengal. The committee concluded that the unrest was due to both economic grievances and to the general spirit of unrest then dominant all over the country. The committee rejected all schemes involving any element of compulsion by legal process. In the public utility services, the committee recommended the establishment of a panel from which a small conciliation board could be formed on the application of one or both parties or by Government of its own motion. Such a board would have no legal status to enforce its findings, but it was expected that public opinion would be sufficiently strong to induce the parties to come to terms on the basis of the findings by the board. In the case of private dispute, the committee recommended that employers and employees should settle their differences by direct negotiations which could be carried on by a joint works committee. "The idea of the panchayat," remarked the committee, "as an agency for settling social and economical affairs is familiar in India, and a joint works committee organised on proper lines would supply a panchayat for regulating industrial affairs so far as they concern the workers." Where both parties expressed a desire for impartial outside intervention, Government should endeavour to meet their wishes and might appoint a board similar to that in the public utilities.



Shortly after, the Bombay Government also appointed a committee of 9 members "to consider and report on the practicability or otherwise of creating machinery for the prevention and early settlement of industrial disputes." The recommendations of the committee falls into two groups, the prevention and the settlement of disputes. As to the prevention, the committee recommended standardisation of wages, recognition of unions by employers and registration by the Government, formation of works committees, introduction of welfare work and improvement of housing. Regarding settlement, the committee deprecated any outside interference, specially by the State until all other means have been employed and have failed, or unless it was invited by one or both parties to the dispute, or unless the situation was such that peace, order, and good government were prejudiced. If such condition would arise, then there should be formed an industrial court of inquiry to be followed, if necessary, by an industrial court of conciliation. Three persons representing employers and three persons representing employees in the industry concerned should form the membership of the court. The report of the committee is still under consideration.

The recommendations of the committee are subject to several criticisms, the most important of which is the proposed selection of labor representatives by the Labore Office. The Labor Office being a government body could not be trusted by laborers to take any part in the selection of their representatives. Laborers often suspect that Government sides with employers. This is especially so in India where the Government is foreign to the country and where most of the officers and a large number of employers are foreigners.



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Preventive Measures.

Two fundamental forces of the industrial disputes are acquisitiveness and self-assertion. Under the influence of the former, the employer wants to make profits often even at the cost of the employee and the employee wants to increase his wages irrespective of business conditions. Under the influence of the latter, the employer desires to manage his business in his own way without interference even by the employee, and the employee desires to be respected as an individual although he works for others and to say something in the affairs of the industry in which his life and welfare are vitally concerned. Any measures which can bring about a conciliation between labor and capital on these two points can solve the problems of industrial disputes. But none of the measures recommended for the prevention of disputes can reconcile these forces and solve the problems.

In the first place, the welfare work no doubt intends to improve labor conditions. Since it takes away some of the grievances of the workers and reduces the causes of friction between labor and capital, it serves as a preventative measure. But its field of activity is very much limited, as indicated before.

In the second place, standardisation of wages may eliminate some of the local frictions and thus reduce small strikes. But as long as there is a body of persons bent on making as much profit as they can on their investment and, therefore, anxious to pay laborers as little as possible, and there is another body of persons goaded either by dire necessity or love for comfort is determined to get higher wages, the friction is bound to come, be it on a smaller or



larger scale. Standardisation of wages makes the dispute wider whenever it comes.

In the third place, trade unions make laborers better articulate and serve as a channel of communication between labor and capital. Disputes through misunderstanding can thus be easily avoided. But most of the disputes arise due to difference in the viewpoints rather than to misunderstandings. The registration of unions will undoubtedly raise their status and, therefore, be more readily recognised by employers. The failure on the part of employers to recognise unions has been one of the important causes of the recent strikes. The growth of trade unions is not, however, a means of preventing industrial disputes. It acts just the other way. It makes laborers more conscious of class interests and class power, and leads to right their wrongs by collective activity and strikes, if necessary.

In the fourth place, the most important measure adopted for the prevention of strikes is the formation of the works committee. The object of the works committee is "to enable the employer to realise the difficulties and hardships of his men, and to give the employed an opportunity of making known their needs and of influencing directly the policy of those who control the factory or workshop in which they work."

The works committees were introduced into the B. B. and C. I. Railway in 1920. The committees consist of 6 members each in each of the railway districts, representing in all about 25,000 employees. It is restricted only to the literary persons. Social and general questions of wages, housing, schools, medical provision, and the like are being discussed. Matters of general interest are referred to one of the two central committees located at Bombay and



Ajmere and formed of 14 representatives from various district committees, one being from each committee.

Works committees were introduced in the cotton mills of Messrs. Currimbhoy Ebrahim and Company and of Messrs. Tata and Sons in 1921. In the mills of the former, a general committee of about 81 members, viz., representatives of the workmen and all the officers of the mill, with the manager as president, elects a working committee of about 20 persons, which decides questions of conditions and discipline and forwards them to the supervising board for disposal. The board consists of 8 members from the agents, 3 from the Social Service League and welfare work organizations of Bombay, 3 from the Servants of India Society and 20 presidents of the cooperative societies in the mills. The works committees in the mills of the latter are based on practically the same conditions. The questions of hours and wages are excluded from the consideration by the committees.

The most important cause of labor disputes is economic and, if the works committees are not allowed to express their opinion on the wage question, the success of these committees as a means of preventing strikes is extremely doubtful. No doubt strikes have taken place in the mills of Messrs. Tata and Sons without notice and without formulating their grievances through works committees.

Conciliatory Methods.

The recommendations of various committees appointed by different provincial governments have not yet been given effect. There is no question that some of them will be tried in the near future. In the meantime, several methods have been adopted to solve the immediate problems which the industrial



disputes have given rise to in different sections of the country.

The most important of these methods is arbitration. This has been tried in some of the big strikes in Bombay. The position of the arbitrator undoubtedly influenced the disputants. Men like Mr. Gandhi exerted great influence upon all classes of people. But such a popular and impartial arbitrator is not always handy, especially in these days when the disputes have become a thing of everyday occurrence. If arbitration is handed over to a board or court instead of an individual, the inherent defects of arbitration cannot be eliminated. Arbitration tends to impose its will or decision upon the disputants from outside without taking into consideration real causes of the dispute. It is at best temporary and palliative. Besides, arbitration is rather difficult in India on account of political conditions. The great majority of employers, except those in the cotton industry, are Englishmen. Most of the disputes are likely to arise between English employers and Indian employees. In case of arbitration, the arbitrator would naturally be an Englishman or an English board. Unfortunately, Indian laborers, whether or not there is any justification for such suspicions, would question the impartiality of a decision made by Englishmen when the issue is between them and the Englishmen.

Mediation boards or committees for the settlement of disputes have also been in operation in several parts of the country. In strikes in the Buckingham and Carnatic mills of Madras in 1921, for instance, which lasted from May 20 to October 21, 1921, and involved several thousand workers, the Madras corporation on its own initiative appointed a committee to mediate and bring about a settlement of the



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strikes. A similar committee of mediation was appointed by the employers themselves and a temporary peace was restored.

Direct negotiation is a much more effective means of bringing about industrial peace in India. It has a very great effect on the mind of the working people. One of their keenest desires is to have access to the employer and tell him their grievances. It has become traditional with Indian people to have direct and informal access to Indian princes or his representatives when engaged in the dispensation of justice. Direct negotiations between employers and employees will lead the latter to take active part in their affairs and to preserve their interest by making them self-conscious and self-reliant, and will, therefore, afford a training ground for democracy.



CHAPTER VIII

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROBLEMS.

A movement starts with some objects in view. Some of them may be vague and indefinite, while others are immediate and definite. The success of the movement may be judged from the full or partial realisation of its objects.

Material Gain.

The labor movement started primarily from economic causes. The consideration of its economic or material success becomes, therefore, of prime importance. Its principal achievements may be stated as follows:

First, the most conspicuous achievement is the abolition of the indentured system which had existed for over three quarters of a century and against which agitation continued for over a generation. No doubt the present system of labor supply to the plantations in India, which is a form of indenture, will also be soon abolished.

Second, the next important achievement is the regulation of woman and child labor. In the beginning there was no restriction on the working hours of women and children. Sometimes they worked the same hours as men. The first act of 1881 fixed the minimum age of children at 7. It was raised to 9 in 1891 and to 12 in 1922. The corresponding maximum ages were also raised from 12 in 1881 to 14 in 1891 and to 15 in 1922. During the period, the number of their working hours has also been reduced from 9 to 6 a day. It was in 1891 that the working hours of women were first limited to 11 a day with a rest period of $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours. The reduction of hours from



72 to 60 a week by the act of 1922 also affected woman workers. By subsequent laws, women and children were also prohibited from work at night or at dangerous operations.

Third, the reduction of the working hours for men is another important success. In the beginning of the factory system, from sunrise to sunset was the common working day. In the most of the factories, the hours did not amount to more than 8 to 10 a day. But in the cotton industry the hours were excessive, especially in 1905-6. By the act of 1911, these hours were limited to 72 a week and by the recent act to 60 hours a week, as mentioned above.

Fourth, another gain of the movement is that it has been able to draw the attention of the public and the government to the unsanitary and demoralising housing conditions in many cities like Bombay. The result of the recent agitation has been that definite steps have been taken by employers, municipalities and port trust companies for better housing accommodations.

Fifth, the conditions of work and living have also been improved in other industries, such as mines and plantations. After successive measures, working hours have been reduced and provisions have been made for safety and sanitation.

While these are the permanent achievements to the cause of labor, other gains of importance have also been achieved by the movement in the recent years. The most important ones are as follows: First, almost universal increase of wages varying in degrees in different industries. Second, more regular payment of wages and bonus. Third, a promise of compensation in case of serious or fatal accidents. Fourth, better treatment by employers.



Moral Gain.

A still greater achievement of the Indian labor movement is the moral gain. Moral achievement comes only through self-consciousness and self-realisation. For centuries Indian workers have accepted their social and industrial status without questioning its validity. The labor movement for the first time in the history of the country has begun to make them class-conscious.

Another feature of moral success is a sense of class-solidarity. Not only a large number of the workers are becoming awakened to the new consciousness, but there is also a feeling among many of them that their interests are common and they must stand by one another for common welfare. In the recent strikes, this spirit has been indicated. Many of the strikes were sympathetic in origin.

Among the moral gains must also be included the various methods of education, welfare work, and recreation which have been introduced by workers in various industrial centers. This kind of work was started first by employers and then by social workers. But labor organisations have also taken up such work in their own hands.

One of the outstanding features of the movement is self-control with which most of the workers have conducted themselves, especially in all the strikes. Considering the widespread character of the strikes and acute distress of the workers involved, rioting has been negligible. It is this spirit of self-restraint which led them to victory. No doubt, the non-cooperation and non-violence movement of Mr. M. K. Gandhi played an important role in the cultivation of the spirit of self-control on the part of the workers.

The laborers have also shown their independance of action. In July, 1920, the Government of Madras



decided to appoint a committee of employers and employees to investigate into the causes of labor disputes, but the chairmanship of the proposed committee was given over to a man, who supported the nationally condemned Rowlatt Acts. The Madras Central Labor Board, representing organisations, refused to cooperate in such a committee.

Industrial Status

Another important feature of their moral gain is the establishment of a new industrial status for the working classes. Under the old industrial organisation, cultivators and artisans were two important industrial classes, both of which were independent workers. Labor for hire and even manual labor lost its dignity. The labor movement has been attempting to restore the dignity of labor.

What really commands respect and secures recognition is not the nature of occupation, but its significance to society and its relationship to self-development. In recent years, workers have become self-confident and self-assertive and by various aggressive activities, have impressed upon the nation their importance to the modern industrial organisation. Their educational and cultural ideals have commanded national respect.

Employers' Attitude.

One of the notable features of the existing status of the workers is the recognition of the unions by the employers. In some cases, the employers have been slow to do so and the result has been strikes. In many cases such strikes have been won and the unions have been recognised.

Another instance showing the status of the workers in modern industries is their participation



in the management of some of their conditions. The works committee mentioned before has given some such status. There is no question that it is far from satisfactory. But a beginning has been made and the right of the workers to participate in such affairs has been conceded. There is no doubt that it will grow.

Government Attitude.

Some of the labor leaders feel that the attitude of the Government toward labor has not been entirely impartial. They charge that the Government has openly favored the employers in supplying them with troops and police not only to preserve peace in times of industrial dispute, but also to coerce and intimidate the laborers into submission. The Madras Government, for instance, lent 50 members of the labor corps to the Electrical Supply Corporation to carry on the work and thus to starve the strikers to submission after 53 days.

Some of the court decisions have also led the labor leaders to such belief. The decision of the Madras Court, mentioned above, is very significant to this point: First, the court tacitly approved of the contention of the employers that they would not deal with outsiders, which meant a blow to the trade union movement in India. Second, any kind of activity which seems to be against the interest of the employer might be considered "malicious" and the leaders might be prevented by injunction from taking any part in industrial disputes. Third, if the labor unions cannot achieve their aims by open and constitutional agitation, they will be driven to have recourse to underhand means thus aggravating the bitterness and estrangement between labor and capital.



Since the Government itself is the sponsor of the capitalistic system and even the employer of large body of workers, it is liable to become more or less biased against employees. The Government of India has, however, either willingly or by the force of circumstances, enacted labor laws for the regulation of the conditions in mines, plantations, factories and other industries. The Government of India has also accepted labor representation in all industrial conferences. If the recommendations of the various committees on reconciliation are enacted into law, the legal status of labor will be established as one of the two principal industrial classes in India.

Public Attitude.

The public has taken a very sympathetic attitude toward the labor movement. The workers have been financially helped in their strikes, and the Home Rule League and the Moslem League openly sided with some of the strikers to bring about reconciliation.

The importance of the service rendered by the public for the furtherance of the labor movement cannot be overestimated. The leadership has always come from outside. The grievances of labor have existed for years. It was the "intellectuals" who made them conscious of their grievances, inspired them with the new ideals and aspirations, organised them into unions and helped them win the strikes. Without such leadership, the movement could not proceed very far.

The national organisations have also expressed their sympathy for the cause of labor. The Indian National Congress, for example, in its session at Nagpur in 1920, passed a resolution to the effect



that laborers should be organised with a view to the promotion of their well being, and with the object of securing their just rights. The same Congress instructed its committee to appoint a sub-committee in order to give effect to the resolution. The National Liberal Federation, a similar organisation of the moderate party, also passed resolutions advising the Government to legalise trade unions and made some suggestions for the amendment of the existing factory act.

There are reasons for such active sympathy of the public for the cause of labor. First, the cleavage between labor and capital is not yet very distinct in India. A large part of the capital invested in India comes from abroad, and although the remainder has been raised in the country, the number of stockholders in capitalistic production is very small. Second, the spirit of nationalism has stirred the whole people. Now they realise more than ever before that both progress and prosperity of India depend upon elevation of the masses. It is through this realisation that several eminent men have been drawn to the cause of labor.

Nature of the Problem.

The labor problem is essentially economic in its nature. It deals principally with the difficulties of the laboring classes in the preservation and furtherance of their economic interest.

The prime object of the modern industrial organisation is to make profit. As profit depends upon the difference between the cost of production and the market price, and as the price is more or less beyond the control of an individual employer, his chief interest lies in lowering the cost of which wages are



often the principal item. The prospects of profits also determine the expansion or contraction of business, disregarding the necessity of work as a means of livelihood to a large population. The private ownership of the means of production brings about a still more important distinction between the employing and the working classes. In addition to the remuneration for personal services, the former derives a large income in the form of rent and interest, while the only asset of the latter is the personal services which are more or less perishable and which are sold at a more competitive price. The income of the wage-earners thus becomes both low and insecure.

The condition of the workers becomes still worse by some of the features of the modern productive system, such as application of mechanical power to the productive system, large scale production, employment of a large number of workers at a certain time and place and production much ahead of consumption due to the distance of the market. Some of the problems of labor, such as long hours, sickness and accidents, and unemployment are the direct results of these conditions.

The distinction between the wage-earning class and the capitalistic class lies in this fundamental difference in the economic interests and the problems arising out of the conflicts in these interests are essentially economic. But the effects of these problems are not limited to the economic field alone. They stand against the enjoyment of many social privileges and the exercise of many political rights on the part of the working classes. The object of the labor movement is to solve primarily the economic problems and secondarily to look after the social and political interests.



Consciousness and Solidarity.

The first and most important problem of the labor movement is that of class-consciousness among the rank and file of the working classes. If the workers would further their interests, they must first of all know what these interests are and how do they differ from those of the capitalists. The majority of the workers are ignorant of their status and even of their conditions. The result is their support and co-operation have not been fully available to the labor movement. The difficulty in making the workers alive to their conditions becomes all the more greater in India for the reason that they are mostly illiterate and cannot be approached through the press, which is the most important means of communication in the modern time.

While class-consciousness is the corner stone, class solidarity supplies the foundation on which the labor temple can be built. Unless all the interests are centralised into one united whole, the concerted action for the achievement of common aims becomes impossible.

The problem of class solidarity among the workers is as great, if not greater, as that of class-consciousness. The wide area over which they are scattered makes contact difficult. The greatest enemy of labor is, however, laborers themselves. It becomes evident in the case not only of strike-breaking but also of concerted actions. Petty jealousies, temporary self-interests and narrow outlooks have often caused dissensions in the labor camp and stopped the progress of the labor movement. The most recent danger to the cause of labor has appeared in the form of spying. While there are professional detectives employed by the capitalists, the most of the spying work is done by the workers themselves.



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The organisation of the laboring classes into unionism is, however, the first step toward solidarity. The progress made in India in this direction is both praise-worthy and encouraging.

Masses and Leaders.

The next important problem is that of leadership. Owing to the comparative newness, the labor movement in India has to depend upon outside advice and direction.

Outside leadership is not a new thing in the history of labor. It was in fact the outsiders who first awakened class-consciousness and formulated class ideals among the workers. It is more or less true even to-day. Outside help becomes all the more important in India where workers lack education and have lost a good deal of initiative through centuries of social and political repression.

The leaders in India come mostly from the 'intellectuals', comprising such classes as teachers, preachers, editors, reformers, lawyers and politicians. Some of the leaders belong even to the landlord, official and capitalistic classes. The domination of the workers by the intellectual class is not without its danger. The workers are liable to forget the real issue of the problem. Under the paternalistic influence, they may lose their power of initiative and fail to develop into an intelligent body of men and women alert to the preservation of their own interest and of those of society. But the greatest danger to the cause of labor lies in the leadership by the aristocracy and bureaucracy which are consciously or unconsciously liable to mislead the workers in the the real solution of the problem.

However defective the outside leadership may be, it is the only means to the growth of the labor



movement in India to day. This inherent weakness is not, however, without some mitigating features. Different classes of intellectuals may add their respective viewpoints to the cause of labor and thus enrich and broaden the outlook of the laboring classes. Moreover, under the guidance of these intellectuals, the workers can receive a sound training for the conduct of their own affairs and for the leadership of their own people.

The main question in connection with a leader is not whether he comes from outside or grows from inside; but what his attitude is toward the rank and file of the workers. At the outset, he must clearly understand the real issue of the labor question and have genuine sympathy for the ideals and aspirations of the laboring classes. He must also have a clear vision of the immediate goal and full confidence in the methods used. Above all, he must be willing to serve the cause of labor and not his own interests. His success lies not in winning strikes or increasing wages, but in elevating the workers to the level of his own aims and methods.

Education and Training.

The most important problem of the laboring classes is that of education and training. Upon the proper solution of this problem depends not only the economic betterment of the workers, but also their moral and intellectual development.

Education is a means for the expression of life in relation to the environment. It implies first of all an adequate body of traditions including ideals and technique. The function of education is first to initiate or adapt a person to these traditions and secondly to inspire him to develop his own indivi-



duality. Upon the proper coordination of these two functions depends the success of education.

There was a time when India's traditions were among the highest and richest in the world. But within the past centuries, they have remained more or less stationary, while those of other countries, especially in Europe and America, have made rapid progress. Discovery and invention have led to the enlargement of society. Life has become much more diversified and complicated. The incomplete and obsolete traditions of India cannot form the basis of education for modern life.

From the viewpoint of industrial technique, there is still another phase to the question. Intensity of work, regularity of hours, and use of machinery make work in factories and other modern industries quite different from that in fields and shops from which the laborers generally come. On the other hand, the modern system of production and distribution has made the world one international market, where the workers sell their labor at a more or less competitive price. Equipped with antiquated technique, Indian workers have thus to compete with the modern industrial workers in Europe and America, and get, therefore, the worst of the bargain. For the adaptation of Indian workers to the modern system of production, India needs new traditions in technique.

Class interest raises still another aspect to the question. The history of the world is the history of class domination. There has never been a time when one class of society did not dominate other classes and develop such traditions for its own interest as laws, customs and doctrines. The present traditions of India have largely been influenced by the ruling social, political and industrial



classes. A critical valuation of these traditions is also a problem of workers' education.

The first problem of the workers' education is, therefore, a new orientation of the old traditions and the creation of the new ones. New ideals of life should be created and new technique for the realisation of these ideals should be found. The second problem is the socialisation of these traditions among the workers. The best method of socialising or imparting knowledge is schooling. But schools in India are few and far between. Practically all of the workers are illiterate. The universal and compulsory education is the first step toward the solution of the problem.



CHAPTER IX.

EFFECTS AND CONCLUSIONS.

Labor and Population.

The significance of the labor movement is by no means confined to the laboring classes, but it has a profound influence upon the whole society. In order to comprehend this significance, it is essential to take into consideration the proportion of the workers to the whole population.

The number of workers is only 3 millions in modern industries and 28 millions in agriculture and domestic service, as we have seen. According to the census of 1911, which is still the latest source of the data on the subject, there were 45.9 million people in the latter group including both actual workers and their dependents, while the number of dependents of the former class was unknown. It is, however, not too much to assume that there are about 50 million people or about one-sixth of the total population of the country, who belong partly or wholly to the wage-earning classes. But the potential supply of the laborers in India is still much greater.

The population of India may be roughly divided into four classes: First, the upper class or the aristocracy of land and wealth. Second, the middle class or the nobility of birth and education. Third, peasants and artisans or the independent industrial workers. Fourth, workers who depend upon wages either fully or partly for their livelihood. The last two classes comprise over 90 per cent of the people. The number of the peasants and artisans amounts to about 200 million people, a large portion of which is bound sooner or later to become wage-earners for the following reasons:



First, under the pressure of foreign competition, India is rapidly adopting industrialism and absorbing the artisans into the wage-earning classes.

Second, agriculture supports at present about 72 per cent of the population, a proportion too large for the economic cultivation of the land. The introduction of scientific agriculture will throw a large number of small peasants out of the overcrowded area.

Third, India is one of the largest producers of the world's raw material, which is mostly exported at the present time. With the growth of national economy, a considerable portion of it will be manufactured within the country employing a large number of the people.

Fourth, there is a large class of people who live by rendering personal services to the village or the town, such as the priests and menials. The decadence of the old industrial organisation has made their occupation more or less precarious. The increasing cost of living can scarcely be met by the customary rate of remuneration. The economic forces have already driven many of them to seek employment in the city. The majority of them are still waiting for industrial opportunities.

India may not become one of the so-called manufacturing countries like England and Germany, but it is only a question of time that she will have highly developed modern industries for the supply of her essential manufactures. If the present system of production and distribution continues to exist, there will develop a small class of employers and a vast body of employees in India as in any other industrially advanced country.

What will be the proportion of the wage-earners to the whole population is hard to say. It is, however,



not the actual proportion but the closeness of the social and economic status between the workers and the rest of the masses which is more significant. At present, the status of the workers is practically the same as that of the peasants and artisans from whom they are emerging. Although there may develop some difference in the relative position of these classes, the influence of the workers on the latter classes will remain great for a long time to come.

Industrial Reorganisation.

The most obvious effect of the labor movement is to be found upon industrial life. The old economy of the village and the town is being fastly replaced by national and international economy. Agriculture, manufacture, mining, transportation and other branches of production have come under the influence of modern industrialism.

While the wage-earning classes are the effect of modern industrialism, they are also the cause of its further development. In the beginning, there was scarcity of labor for factory work in India. This is more or less true even today. The new technique and long hours partly account for the labor shortage. By reducing hours and increasing wages, the labor movement is making modern industries more attractive and the labor supply more adequate. On the other hand, by raising the standard of living and imparting education and training, the labor movement also promises to solve the problem of comparative inefficiency of Indian labor, which has been one of the detriments to the growth of modern industries. So far as the movement furthers the growth of modern industrialism, it is a factor in the industrial reorganisation of India.



The modern system of production is a great improvement upon the older ones. Within a century and a half, it has revolutionised the whole industrial system. No other institution has made a better use of the human knowledge, such as discoveries and inventions, for the furtherance of its cause. It has immensely increased the capital and dividend of society of which even the workers have become beneficiary. The prime interest of the labor movement lies, however, in a more equitable distribution of national dividend rather than in the mere augmentation of it. It is the reorganisation of the distributive system at which the labor movement principally aims.

The wastage and injustice of the modern industrial system cannot be exaggerated. Useless competition, restriction upon production, and even destruction of commodities for price control are only a few instances. A system, which gives only a few men control of the vast majority of the people, compels men, machinery and material to remain idle in the face of great need around and throws periodically a multitude of able-bodied and willing workers out of the means of their livelihood, is inefficient economically, unjust politically and immoral socially. It is bound to change and the people who suffer most from the system are going to bring about the transformation.

One of the aims of the labor movement is the establishment of collective bargaining, which will undoubtedly improve the condition of the workers. But as long as one class of the people depends only upon personal services for their income and another class derives rent and interest in addition to the remuneration for personal services, as noted before, there is bound to remain a great divergence in the income of the two classes leading to the difference



in social prestige and political power. The realisation of this fact has led a large number of workers to demand the nationalisation of land and capital and the organisation of industry for use and not for profit. The labor movement in India is young and its present aim is collective bargaining. But it will not be long before the Indian workers, who had enjoyed economic independence on farms and in shops, realise the limitation of their demand and be imbued with the desire for the equality of economic opportunity, which industrial democracy alone can fulfil.

Political Reconstruction.

Not less significant is the effect of the labor movement upon the political life of the country. Absolute monarchy together with consequent tyranny and despotism were not be unknown to such a large country like India with a long history of foreign invasions and alien dominations. But the essential feature of the Indian polity was democracy which was the basis of the village organisation. Every village was a republic in which all questions of common interest were decided by the *panchayat*, or the council of five men. Neither the Hindu monarchs nor the Mohammedan emperors ever interfered with this fundamental right of the Indian masses. Under the British rule this democracy was replaced by bureaucracy.

The national question of India to-day is how to attain *Swaraj* or self-government. In the solution of the problem lies the vital interest of the working classes. For over a generation the National Congress and Provincial Conferences have been struggling for political rights and privileges. But without the support of the masses, who are the real repositories of all power, they became nothing but debating clubs of



the intellectuals. In the recent awakening of the Indian masses, of which the labor movement is the best expression, the Congress has found a real source of hope and inspiration. In the achievement of Swaraj, the labor movement will be an important factor.

The establishment of Swaraj is, however, half the game. If the British bureaucracy is replaced by Indian aristocracy, the workers will not be much better off. A much more significant point to the workers is to democratise the government so that it can be a rule of the people for the people. Democracy in the true sense of the word may be a dream. But a government in which the people take active part in making laws for the guidance of their own conduct and in devising means for the promotion of their own welfare is within the reach of all people.

Labor has also a special interest in political activities. Modern industrialism owes its origin to the existing political institutions, such as private property and free competition. A permanent change in the modern system of production and distribution implies a reconstruction of these institutions, which can be brought about by the active participation of labor in the local and national governments. The advent of the labor party in the political field implies a better distribution of power among the classes, if not among the masses. In educating the workers in the national affairs, in demanding universal franchise, and in participating in some of the legislative measures, the labor movement has taken the first step toward democracy.

Social Regeneration.

A still more important effect of the labor movement in India is the regeneration of social life. Two important elements which brought about reorganisa-



ation in Western societies are modern industrialism and public education including the press. That they will have similar effects in India cannot be doubted. Public education in India may still be a question of the future, but industrialism has already begun to re-classify the people. While this process is more or less mechanical, the labor movement promises to make it conscious and functional. In fact, the social effects of the labor movement are manifold:

First, like the Greek and the Roman societies, the society in India represented the life of only a few upper classes. The masses of the people remained inert and vegetative. Neither political revolutions nor religious reforms found any means for the reclamation and acclimatisation of the intellectual and spiritual wealth of the teeming multitude. The labor movement has, for the first time in India's history, given them a means for the assertion of their rights and for the development of their individuality.

Second, since the 12th century, through immigration and conversion, a large number of Mohammedans has grown up in India. For the most part, the Hindus and the Mohammedans have lived peacefully. But there was no great and common cause in which they could unite their interests. The Swaraj movement offered such a cause, but owing to the remoteness of politics from the masses and the manipulation of the British authorities, the Hindus and Mohammedans never stood together until very recently. The labor movement has given the Hindu and Mohammedan workers a new cause in which they have united their economic interests. This unity in the industrial field will be gradually extended to other spheres of society.

Third, the caste first originated in the economic division of labor and afterwards received social



and religious sanctions. The more or less static condition of society has made it so rigid that it is to-day a great hindrance to social progress in India. Various religious movements have unsuccessfully attempted to abolish it. A system which is economic in origin can be replaced only by economic institutions. By organising trade and industrial unions, the labor movement has given a new basis of class formation which will gradually replace the old caste system.

Fourth, one of the great defects in India is the lack of towns and cities, which generally act as the centers of new ideas. Modern industrialism has led to the growth of towns. But these industrial towns are liable to bring in slums, saloons and brothels. One of the aims of the labor movement is to eliminate these evils on the one hand and to establish educational, recreative and cultural institutions on the other. New ideals and aspirations from these centers will have great influence upon the rural population.

Fifth, women work as hard in India as in any other country and contribute a large share to the wealth of the country. But owing to the lack of social sanction, they did not have any economic independence and had mostly to live under the protection of their relatives. Unionisation and other activities of the labor movement will not only improve their industrial status, but also raise their social position. Economic independence will sooner or later lead them to participate in all social privileges and political rights.

Lastly, the labor movement is also a means for establishing cultural relationship between the workers of India and those of other countries. India has been a more or less isolated country. New ideas from



abroad had very little chance to come to the people except through invaders and missionaries. But it took ages before they could filter through different social strata to the masses. Labor organisations all over the world having practically the same aims to achieve and the same problems to solve are constantly in touch with one another and serve as a direct means of communication among the working classes. This contact with the workers of the other countries will be a source of inspiration for new ideals and activities among the Indian masses.

The labor movement has thus been bringing the workers irrespective of caste and creed or age and sex into new social contact and adapting them into new social conditions. In the labor movement the masses of India have found an avenue through which they can seek the redress of their grievances, demand the rights and privileges, and command the respect and recognition. The effect of this will be the enlargement of social scope, the rise of new social ideals and the formation of a new social order.

Cultural Orientation.

Another important effect of the labor movement has been showing itself upon the culture of the people. Culture is the idealistic conception of life, which is expressed in thoughts and actions.

Life is a series of adaptations to environment both physical and social. It can be achieved either by adjusting or subduing the inner nature to the external world or by conquering or subjugating the external world to the inner nature. The two processes are interrelated, but the relative emphasis put upon the one process or the other makes a great difference



in the nature of a civilisation. In one case, civilisation tends to be material and in the other, spiritual.

Hindu civilisation is essentially spiritual in nature. The ideal of Hindu life is to realise either here or hereafter that entity of which this visible world is a mere expression. Centuries before the Christian era, Hindus conceived this entity in the terms of truth, beauty and good, and tried to realise these ideals in inner life. Art, science and philosophy were cultivated for finding means for the realisation of these ideals. Even the social institutions were built with this object in view. The control of mind for the realisation of moral and spiritual ideals is the essence of Hindu civilisation. But in the very refinement of Hindu civilisation lies its weakest point. Its lofty ideals are beyond the reach of the majority of men and women. A civilisation in order to be functional and effective must be such that in it an average person can "live, breathe and have his being". Hindu civilisation originated from the experiences of the few and it has remained for the few even to-day.

Mohammedanism, which like Hinduism is not only a religion but also a civilisation, is very democratic in its nature. Its purely monotheistic doctrines and high ethical principles have united into its fold a large portion of the world's population, irrespective of race and color. The loyalty and earnestness of the Mohammedans, who form about one-fourth of the total population of India, cannot be surpassed by any other sect. But these very virtues of the Mohammedans have been detrimental to their progress. They still scrupulously adhere to their old social, political and industrial ideals which evolved at a very early stage of social development, and which are, therefore, quite inadequate for modern life. Like the Hindus, they also fail to appreciate the



necessity of reorientating their culture in the light of modern science and philosophy and of emphasising the material aspect of life.

Materialism was not unknown to India. In fact, she made considerable progress in commerce and industry, even under the Mohammedan rule. But minimising the importance of material needs of life, she failed to utilise the experiences of the masses into the social organisation. The present civilisations of India are like inverted pyramids. What they need is not demolition, for that would be an irreparable loss to India as well as to the entire humanity, but reconstruction. The ethical superstructure of Indian culture needs a solid material foundation, which can be furnished by the ideals and aspirations as well as the wants and requirements of the masses.

The labor movement representing the Indian masses has brought forward such material and practical questions as health, housing, income, compensation and child and women labor. Such questions were discussed before by reformers and philanthropists, but they failed to receive public attention. The labor movement representing the grievances of actual sufferers has injected these questions into national life.

There is idealism even in the so-called materialism. If the aim of life is to realise truth, beauty and good, this realisation must not only be in thought but also in action. To possess healthy body and sound mind and to own a beautiful home or artistic things are some of the methods of realising the same ideal in material life which is aimed at by a poet or philosopher in spiritual life.

This utilitarian idealism has already made impression on Indian culture. Except perhaps Russia, there is no country on earth which possessed so many



idealists as India. But for the lack of proper field most of them devoted themselves to meditation on self-emancipation or to writing commentary on Hindu philosophy. The materialistic idealism has shown many of them a new process of self-realisation. Many idealists are now working for the betterment of Indian masses.

As a consequence of the mass movement, new ideals are growing in India. The aim of life is not to control mind, but to develop it harmoniously, not to achieve salvation hereafter, but to make the best use of it here below, and not to realise truth, beauty and good only in contemplation but also in the actual experience of daily life; social progress depends not upon the ennoblement of the few but upon the enrichment of the many; and spiritual democracy or universal brotherhood can be achieved only when there is an equality of opportunity in the social, political and industrial life. The projection of the material aspects of life into society has started a new orientation of Indian culture.

International Aspects.

The significance of the labor movement in India is not limited to the improvement of her workers or even of her masses, although social, political and economic amelioration of the millions of the people forming one fifth of the human race itself is a great achievement to the whole humanity. But it has a great influence upon the workers in other countries as well as upon the world at large.

First, modern industrialism is a world-wide institution. Its chief and direct beneficiaries may be very few in number, but this small minority is so



strong and powerful that they control both the world market and international politics. If there be any change in the nature of the system, it must be brought about by the cooperation of international workers. The rapidity with which capital flows from one country to another makes this cooperation all the more necessary. The rise of Indian workers is, therefore, a source of strength to the world labor movement.

Second, although the primary aims of the labor movement are the same all over the world, it has taken different shapes and adapted different methods according to the social and political backgrounds of various countries. This diversity in nature and methods has broadened the scope and enriched the aims of the labor movement. Like the movements in England, France, Germany, the United States and other industrially advanced countries, the movement in India is also a distinct one and has its own share of contribution.

Third, one of the contributions of Labor is that it has produced great men like Karl Marx, whose thoughts and ideals have enriched not only the laboring classes but also the entire society. Great men are not rare in India but their minds were occupied with abstract philosophy. The labor movement in India has diverted their attention to a more humane and practical field and has already helped produce a Gandhi whose idealism is a solace and inspiration to a large number of people in the world.

Fourth, as a means of communication among the workers of the world, the labor movement in India has also another function. India is one of those ancient countries which once achieved a very high stage of civilisation. While its contribution to science and art has been immense,



its achievement in religion and metaphysics still remain unsurpassed. In the first half of the 19th century, Hindu culture was one of the greatest sources of inspiration to the Western thinkers. But this was more or less restricted to the intellectual classes. The spread of Hindu culture among the industrial workers of the world will inspire a new ideal for moral and spiritual realisation.

Concluding Remarks.

Except for the movement for national government, no movement is so important in India today as that of labor. Considered from the viewpoint of its effect on society, it is in fact the most significant movement in the whole history of India. Its significance may be judged from threefold viewpoint: The working classes, the Indian society, and the world at large.

First, the labor movement is showing to the millions of the workers as well as to the rest of the masses in India the importance of their existence. It is a means to their economic improvement as well as to the achievement of their political rights and social privileges.

Second, the reclamation and acclimatisation to the social whole the moral and material experiences of the inert and vegetative masses of India forming more than nine-tenths of the population implies reorganisation in the industrial system, reconstruction in the political organisation, regeneration in the social institutions and reorientation in the cultural ideals of the country.

Third, the advent of the millions of Indian workers in the field of the labor movement is a source of strength to the workers of the world who are



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fighting against the modern industrial system. Moreover, India which has contributed so much to the moral, spiritual and intellectual developement of humanity, promises an equally important share to the cause of labor in establishing social, political and industrial democracy for which the workers in other parts of the world are striving.



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